

Window on Jordan

'Monicagate' gets Jordanians talking

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer
JORDANIANS ARE speculating about Clinton's next move, following the disclosure of the Special Prosecutor's report this week. The Starr report exposes President Clinton's sexual relations with White House intern Monica Lewinsky in graphic detail. Like the rest of the world, Jordanians became interested in the so-called Monicagate scandal and have followed its developments, which could well lead to impeaching the beleaguered US president, with amusement. Many in Jordan wonder if Clinton will resort to another foreign policy

adventure, such as the sudden attack on Afghanistan and Sudan last month, in order to deflect attention from home. Jordanians wonder if the White House might find another pharmaceutical plant to bomb for allegedly manufacturing illegal chemical weapons. And Jordanians ask, who will now pay for President Clinton's latest indiscretions? These questions, and others, are being asked by your "average Jordanian" as Monicagate continues to make front page headlines in all the Jordanian newspapers. "Finally, the world's most powerful president has confessed to an 'inappropriate relationship'

with Monica Lewinsky," says Abu Saeed, the owner of a fruit and vegetable store in Amman. "I beg the media to stop highlighting this affair, and concentrate on something more newsworthy, like the stalled peace process or the violence in the West Bank," he continued. Last month's US airstrikes on Sudan and Afghanistan have been viewed by many in Jordan as grossly unjustified, inhuman and made precisely to export Clinton's internal crisis. Mohammed Hamdan, an engineer at the Univer-



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The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Senate appointments signal a mood of reconciliation

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer
POLITICAL observers believe that the Jordanian political environment is going through yet another transitional phase. This week's appointment of two leading opposition figures to the Senate is sending positive signals to the country's democratic institutions. A Royal Decree appointing five new senators to the Upper House of Parliament was met with much repudiation. The appointees replaced the four senators who resigned last week after joining the Tarawneh Cabinet. The surprise appointment of two former prime ministers, Ahmad Obaidat and Taher Al Masri, has pointed to a new political mood of reconciliation. Observers were unanimous in their approval of the return of Obaidat and Al Masri to the Upper House. It is seen as a welcome gesture from the state to the legislative council. Al Masri, Prime Minister in 1991, and Lower House Speaker in 1993—decided not to run for political office during the 1997 elections. His re-entry into the political sphere has raised many eyebrows. "There is no hidden agenda regarding my return to political life," Al Masri told *The Star*. "His Majesty King Hussein wanted me to participate in the Senate, and being a royal decree, I naturally respected and obeyed it." Al Masri became critical of

the political process in the country following the signing of the peace treaty. He also criticized the government's failure to stand up to regionalists who were threatening national unity. Ahmad Obaidat's absence from political life since 1995 came after he resigned from the Senate, following his openly declared opposition to the peace treaty with Israel. The *Star* tried to contact Obaidat but he is currently on a visit to the US. The parliamentary reaction to the new appointments was upbeat. "The introduction of the new senators shows that the Jordanian state is willing to



Al Masri

Obaidat

involve all political tendencies in the legislative process," commented deputy Abdel Karim Doughm, "and their appointment will enrich the national dialogue inside Parliament. He added, "I am for the participation of all political viewpoints in the Kingdom, as this is the way we can obtain real political pluralism." The new mood spawned rumors that the Muslim Brotherhood was considering making a long overdue participation in the Senate. Its spokesman, Jamil Abu Baker, welcomed the news about the return of Obaidat and Al Masri, but denied the rumors that some members of the Muslim Brotherhood were ready to take a seat in the Upper House. "As far as I know, these rumors are groundless, as all the members of the Brotherhood are still very much committed to boycotting Parliament," Abu Baker told *The Star*. He added that, "Our stance on the electoral proceedings for the Lower House will apply equally to the Upper House as well."



Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa(R) listens to members of his delegation before the start of an Arab League regular session 16 September. The meeting is discussing the Libyan Lockerbie crisis, Iraq's differences with UN weapons inspection teams, and the US missile strike on Sudan.

The political funding debate escalates

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer
SINCE THEIR legalization in 1992, Jordan's political parties have played a vital role in providing a wide forum for debate. There are around 23 political parties, 13 of which make up the so-called opposition. However, the majority of political parties are now facing financial difficulties, and thus affecting their ability to function. The financial crisis common to most parties was aggravated by the debate over whether 'external finance' should be accepted or not. This matter was at the core of the recent dispute in the Jordan Communist Party (JCP), following accusations by its former secretary general, Yacoub Zayadin, that

the present secretary general Munir Hamaneh, began to receive external finances. It seems that the issue died down now, and split averted, at least for now. The Government's viewpoint is outlined in the 1992 Political Parties Law, which prohibits them from receiving outside funding or support as it interferes with their independence. In refuse these allegations, many party secretary generals have called on the Government to allocate finances from the state treasury—without external finance or government support they will not be able to survive. Analysts are saying that this new initiative could signal a new relationship between the Government and

political parties as both would benefit the nation. Dr Abdel Latif Arabiyat, secretary general of the Islamic Action Front (IAF)—the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood—explained that the IAF is opposed to receiving external finance, and that the party's performance is dependent on voluntary action and support from the local community. The normal procedure in other countries is for these institutions to receive assistance and financial aid from the state to be able to perform their duties effectively," Dr Arabiyat told *The Star*. "Most governmental and non-governmental organizations receive state finance, and as political parties serve the same

national interest, why shouldn't they get help?" added Dr Arabiyat. The majority of political parties in Jordan are founded by persons of medium-sized incomes, and need to find other sources of finance. Arabiyat continued to say that, "Since these parties are established by law, and work within the boundaries and terms of the constitution, why doesn't the Government support them with financial aid?" However, Jamil Abu Baker, spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, warns that, "State-financed parties could be influenced by the government, using funding as a means to impose

Five years of peace bears bitter fruit for Gaza

By Lee Hockstader
GAZA CITY—In Gaza's Jabalya Refugee Camp, a slice of real estate twice as crowded as Manhattan and scarred with rancid fields of garbage, Hussein Radwan counts as one of the lucky ones. He has a job. Granted, the work isn't much. Radwan spends six days a week bent over a sewing machine in a sweatshop, whose single concession to comfort is an overhead fan that stirs the thick summer air. For a 12-hour day stitching together denim skirts, he makes \$5.40-45 cents an hour, the *LA Times*-Washington Post News Service Reports. But with well over a third of Gazans looking for work, Radwan knows better than to complain. "In this job I can learn new skills," the 17-year-old Palestinian said tactfully. "Things could be worse." For many Palestinians, they are. And that has come as a bitter shock to people here who were certain that the 1993 Oslo accord with Israel would deliver at least a measure of prosperity along with its promise of peace. Instead, most Palestinians have gotten poorer since the peace agreement was signed five years ago, this Sunday. Incomes, buying power and private investment have plummeted, while the numbers of families living in poverty have swelled. That is particularly true in Gaza, a 140-square-mile strip of sand, sun-scorched apartment blocks and squalid refugee camps stretched along the Mediterranean Sea. It was Gaza's Jabalya Refugee Camp that gave birth to the intifada, the 1987-1993 uprising against the Israeli occupation. But the mood today in Jabalya, if anything, is meaner and more sullen than in the adrenaline-charged days of the intifada, when a generation of teenagers came of age in daily battle with the Israelis, residents say. Now, the Israeli soldiers have withdrawn from most of Gaza, leaving rising poverty, crowding and bitterness in their wake. "The economic situation in Gaza has deteriorated dramatically in the years of peace, which is a very strange phenomenon," said Khaled Abdel Shafi, a Palestinian economist who sits on the Gaza City council. "At first there was a lot of talk of Gaza becoming the Singapore of the Middle East. That's why, to a great extent, people supported the peace agreement, which in many ways is a bad deal for the Palestinians. They hoped at least the economic sit-



World reacts with befuddlement, worry, and distress

By Molly Moore
MEXICO CITY—"Hasta la vista, amigos!" screamed the bold headline in one of Mexico City's most respected newspapers, beneath a photograph of a beaming-looking President Clinton. It was the question weighed no editorial pages, in government offices and at cyber cafes around the globe, as analysts sought to assess the impact of the Starr report on world markets, politics and psyche. "In be sure, the salacious details of Clinton's White House exploits with former intern Monica S. Lewinsky gave the world's headline writers a field day. "Sex, Lies and Impeachment" and "Comeback Kid plots moves in last chance saloon," were two of the headlines in the *Times* of London. "Cigar Sex, Phone Sex, Pizza Sex," read the triple-decker on page one of *The Sun*, Britain's best-read daily. But most of the world's press and international leaders approached the uproar with almost funeral somberness, viewing it as yet another potentially

devastating blow in a relentlessly difficult summer. In a season of international economic gloom, financial and political meltdown in Russia, heightened nuclear anxiety in South Asia, terrorism and war in Africa and growing uncertainty about the future on every continent, many eyes had looked to the only remaining superpower to maintain some semblance of stability on the planet. Now, that hope is diminished. "There is no doubt that a weakened presidency, its energy to deal with global issues sapped, is bad news for the world," intoned Singapore's *Straits Times* newspaper. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, fighting for reelection and trailing in the polls, took time out from his feverish campaigning to warn, "It is of the utmost importance that the only world power fully live up to its duties." "Asia, Africa, India—there are problems everywhere," Kohl told interviewers. "I can only hope the turbulence in Washington can be put to rest as quickly

as possible so that the president is fully capable of performing his tasks." In many nations, however, analysts are already writing Clinton's political obituary. "Two dark vans that drove (the report) to the Capitol were akin to hearses arriving to take away the corpse of the Clinton presidency," reported the Washington correspondent for *The Sydney Morning News* in Australia. The overriding concern for much of the globe is the potential impact of political instability in Washington on already staggering world economies. "Who can see clearly when a sexual virtuoso intern in the White House weighs more heavily on the markets than the economic achievements of whole countries and regions?" asked Hungary's largest daily newspaper, *Nepszabadsag*. And in Mexico, where the stock market and peso have reached all-time lows in the past several days, the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*—in an editorial entitled "Justice, morality, politics, business"—fretted that the Mexican economy could crumble even further because of "a very peculiar combination of a strict respect for justice, a



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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent (R), meets with US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross at the Royal Palace in Amman 16 September. Ross said on Wednesday that Israelis and Palestinians were still at odds over parts of Washington's initiative aimed at breaking a long deadlock in Middle East peacemaking. Photo by Khalil Mazzawi

The political funding debate escalates

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This view is not shared by Dr. Arabiyat. "Parties should have the right to get state finance, regardless of their political stance, as is the norm in most developed countries." In a call for more support from the Government, Munir Hamarneh, of the Communist Party, reiterated that, "Political parties make up the basic core of the civic community, and they function as a mirror reflecting the different shades of the society's political spectrum." He added, "They represent political and ideological pluralism, and are an essential component for a healthy society, so they should be supported in carrying out their objectives."

Mr. Salem Nahas, secretary general of the Popular Democratic Party, pointed out that any form of finance from the state should be relative to the size and activity of the party concerned. "State-financed parties indicate a healthy democratic environment, one where political pluralism is in evidence." All parties agree that this problem needs to be addressed as soon as possible, before there are political casualties, and they see the current trend towards dialogue between the state and the civic institutions as a step in the right direction. The initiative undertaken by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, may be the key to solving the financial problems faced by Jordan's political parties.

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However, the Royal Decree produced mixed feelings from some politicians. Parliamentary sources told *The Star* that there was dissatisfaction from some of the former senators, who did not want to give up their positions. "Tawfeeq Krishan preferred to stay at the Senate, and was ready to abandon his new ministerial post," the source said, "but it was impossible to refuse the new post and he felt obliged to stay in the cabinet."

Bilal Al Tall, the director of the Press and Publications Dept. who was removed from his post and appointed as an advisor at the Prime Ministry, must have been disappointed as well. The decision to dismiss Al Tall has thrilled journalists, who considered the outgoing director as the architect of the present Press and Publication Law. His post was given to Eyad Qattan, an intellectual and someone who has been critical of press censorship.

The other three newly appointed senators have a varied background. Marwan Daudin was president of the Aqaba Regional Authority, and has taken part in the joint Jordanian-Palestinian multi-lateral negotiations on the peace process. Khaled Fanassa is a retired armed forces veteran who holds a Masters in Military and Administrative Sciences, and Ibrahim Ghabbeh is a former deputy, who was elected to the 11th Parliament in 1993 for Tafleeh constituency.

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sity of Jordan, provides another twist in the tale. "The Monicagate scandal is a result of a Jewish plot against the President of the United States, aimed at distracting the US from implementing their proposals for the stalled peace process," he said. This theory is shared by many, who see the stalemate at the Palestinian-Israeli negotiating table to be directly linked to the problems facing Clinton. Others are saying that the peace process has become too reliant on US input, and that when the US is distracted, like when the American president is embroiled in a sexual affair, the peace negotiations come to a standstill. It is now five years since the Oslo peace accords were signed, and many Jordanians are aghast at the blatant double standards set by the US, always favoring Israel.

Ahmed Al Sheikh, who is preparing for a post-graduate degree in chemistry at the University of Jordan, also shares the Israeli-led conspiracy theory. "The Israeli lobby in the US is responsible for focusing all the media's attention on Clinton's sexual misdemeanors; and they will continue to disrupt US policy until all their Zionist objectives have been fulfilled," he said. Mahmoud Abdul Razzak, a translator at the Al Arafat daily, is outraged by the amount of "airtime" the Clinton scandal is receiving in the Arabic press. "I feel ashamed when I have to read all the details of the Clinton scandal—on the front page—while more crucial issues are being neglected. Don't we have problems of our own to speak about, rather than focusing on this humiliating story?" Mr. Razzak wondered. However, some Jordanians are saying that the scandal

does have a positive side. Turki Al Silawi, a press photographer said, "At least this case shows that democracy can take its natural course, and a prosecutor is allowed to perform his duties, no matter who the accused is. The prosecutor has succeeded in bringing the president of the largest superpower to court, and is calling for his dismissal for abusing constitutional responsibilities and for misleading his people when he lied under oath." But everybody is willing to express an opinion. A number of housewives told *The Star* that they sympathize with Hillary Clinton because she is living with the problem on a daily basis. "If I were in her place, I would leave him. She [Hillary] is a strong woman," said Um Asa'ad, a seamstress. Whatever the viewpoint, Jordanians will just have to wait and see the next move in the Clinton soap opera.

World reacts with befuddlement, worry, and distress

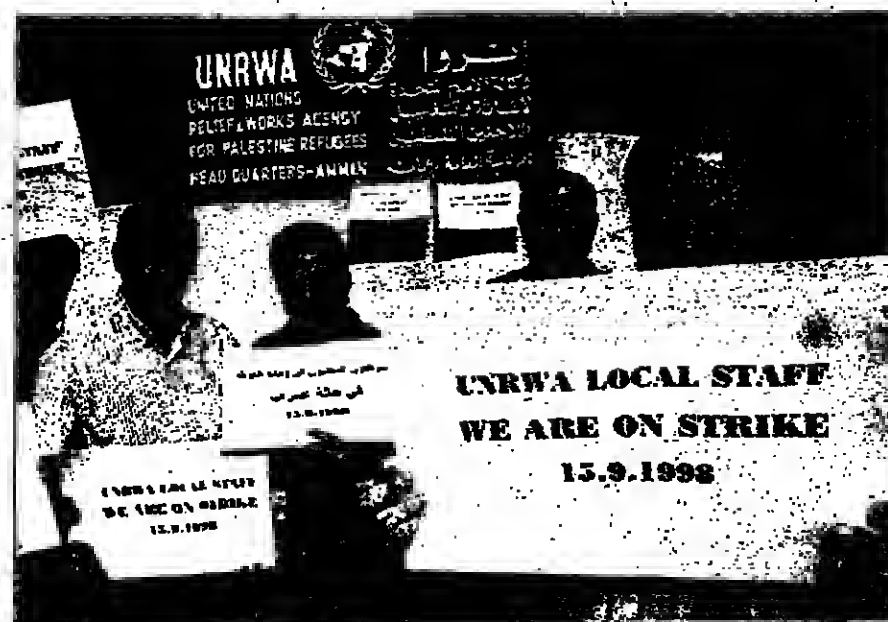
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hypocritical moral puritanism (and) the revenge of a sector of the right." In fact, that muddled confluence of disparate issues both fascinates and confounds much of the rest of the world. In China, where the private lives of Communist Party leaders is off limits to public discussion or the news media, television producer Jiang Jingle marvels, "It's a sign of a democratic and legal society that this could happen to a president," adding that such a public scandal "would never have happened" to China's president. But, from France to Russia to Latin America, where political mistresses are part of the accepted political landscape, there was befuddlement over how sexual exploits could potentially bring down the most powerful leader in the world. The French newspaper *Le Monde* dubbed it the "new McCarthyism, in which the panicked fear of Communism is replaced by the fear of sexuality." In Russia, which has a collapsing economy and a crippled government and where

members of the Duma are said to have brought prostitutes into the legislative building on some nights, newspapers have all but ignored Clinton's problems. Even the threat of impeachment proceedings was allotted only a short, straightforward account in *Izvestia*, the main newspaper. The newscaster for one of Hungary's largest commercial television stations dismissed the Starr report in last Sunday's newscast as "a several thousand page pornographic report" and questioned, "Which is more scandalous? That it happened or that the whole world can read this pornography?" British tabloids, on the other hand, were wallowing in every sordid detail. *The Sun*, owned by conservative press baron Rupert Murdoch, sneered: "William Jefferson Clinton is unfit to be president of the United States.... He is a cheap and nasty guttersnipe with no principles." The ongoing Washington scandal holds personal concerns for some world leaders. Aides to Japan's Minister Keizo Obuchi, who is scheduled to make his first trip to the United States next week, are

agonizing over the prospect of US reporters ignoring their minister while they pepper Clinton with questions about his sex life during a joint press conference. In contrast, British Prime Minister Tony Blair who is also scheduled to meet with Clinton in New York next week, telephoned Clinton as soon as news broke of the Starr report, spent 30 minutes commiserating with his friend and then made sure his spokesman informed the news media of the supportive call. Meanwhile, the foreign press remains fascinated with the unfolding scandal. "Washington is a village gathering for a public execution, unsure what mood to strike," wrote Jonathan Freedland, correspondent for *The Guardian* of London. "It wants to hang its head low in shame, but it cannot resist the chance to gawk and gossip with friends, to soak up the spectacle." *LA Times-Washington Post News Service*

The strike at UNRWA Caution before the breakdown



By Ghassan Joha
Special to The Star

THE STAFF of the United Nations' Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) held a one-day strike on Tuesday, 15 September, as a protest against their work conditions.

The strike, involving only the local Arab staff, affected the agency's five operational centers of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon as well as the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Over 6000 of Jordan's UNRWA employees took part in the silent stand-off in front of the agency's headquarters in Amman. They held placards showing their dismay. Sources from the staff committee said that they wanted the strike at least two weeks ago. They told the management that there would be of what they called a "predicted dissolution of UNRWA, which could lead to general chaos in the organization."

Gunnar Lofberg, who is responsible for UNRWA in Jordan told *The Star* by telephone that the striking staff asked UNRWA's Commissioner General Peter Hansen to negotiate with them, and have set a meeting for 23 September between the two sides in Amman.

"We have to get better funding to cover the expenses of the activities and facilities offered by the agency," added Mr. Lofberg. The scheduled meeting was fixed after joint coordination between Mr. Hansen and the staff representatives. Staff members emphasized that many promises were made to them during the past 10 years, but non fulfilled. Sources, however, stated that officials have failed to persuade the workers not to take such strike action.

The protest went ahead despite an earlier warning that a cut in salary of the staff will

be taken if they did go on strike.

Director-general of the Palestinian Affairs' Department Ibrahim Badran said that the Jordanian government didn't accept the strike as a suitable way to meet the demands of the UNRWA staff. "As long as we all realize and are aware of their demands and work conditions, the staff should look for direct dialogue with the management," added Mr. Badran.

But staff representatives are angry with what they see as the apparent difference in salaries between them and the senior managers—they received pay rises of up to 40 percent, staff members say. "If the agency does not yield to our demands another open strike will take place on 28 September," said members of the staff committee.

Students in the Bagg'a refugee camp, were forced to stay at home as all schools were closed. Health and women-care centers also were out of work, as the employees stopped work.

In the Gaza strip, schools, medical centers and supply offices were at a standstill. The strike however was only partly eligible in Lebanon.

UNRWA's staff committees of the five fields consist of 22000 employees and workers. UNRWA employees expressed hope that Mr. Hansen may respond to their "sensible request and talk with our representatives to end the dispute." It is not the first time that employees have complained of poor conditions. Although UNRWA receive global contributions these are not enough to cover its annual budget estimated at \$314 million. UNRWA was established in 1950 after the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, in order to help the 3.5 million Palestinian registered refugees, where more than one million of them are living in Jordan.

Five years of peace bears bitter fruit for Gaza

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uation would improve." The fear is that Palestinians will give up on the fraying Middle East peace process as their hopes for prosperity fade. Already, support is inching higher for Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder and spiritual leader of the militant Islamic group Hamas, according to polling data. If peace means impoverishment, some Palestinians say, why should they support it?

The question is all the more apt given the benefits the Oslo accord has brought to Israel.

Although the Israeli economy lately has hit a rocky patch, with joblessness creeping toward 10 percent, it boomed in the mid-1990s. Most Israelis are better off now than they were when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat shook hands at the White House five years ago. The same cannot be said for Palestinians, however, especially in Gaza.

"The Palestinian economy is in crisis—a crisis measured not just in terms of declining income but also of declining hope," Stuart E. Eizenstat, US undersecretary of state, told an Israeli audience in June. "We are at risk of diminishing the constituency for peace, not only among the public at large but increasingly among Palestinian business people."

To understand one of the reasons why the Palestinian economy has nose-dived, it is helpful to pay a pre-dawn visit to the Erez Crossing, one of the few transit points between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

At 5 O'clock in the morning, the rush for the exits has been on for an hour. Swarms of men walk briskly to the Israeli security checkpoints, smoking their first cigarettes of the day. They kick up a haze of dirt and sand that hangs like a shroud over a small army of vendors selling falafel and sweets, yogurt and hummus.

About 30,000 Palestinian workers, half of them from Gaza, cross into Israel proper every day to work in fields, factories, homes and gardens. By Palestinian standards, their wages are good—two or three times more than they could earn for a day's work in Gaza.



Memories of occupation still looms in Gaza

Yet the number of Palestinians authorized to work in Israel is down by half from a decade ago. From Gaza, it has fallen by two-thirds.

Beginning with the intifada, Israel slashed the number of Palestinian workers it admitted each day. While the government gradually has eased up in the last two years by handing out more work permits, it has not made up for the lost earnings.

What's more, sporadic Israeli closures of Gaza and the West Bank, in response to Palestinian terror attacks, prompted Jewish-owned businesses to seek a more reliable supply of labor. That led Israel's previous government to admit a huge influx of foreign workers, many of them from Romania and other East European countries.

The result: dwindling demand for Palestinian workers and less cash coming into Gaza's economy, where incomes are already half those of the West Bank—and a tenth those in Israel.

"Savings are gradually being exhausted," said Abdel Shafi, the city council member. "People are selling their valuables. [Foreign] assistance compensates somewhat for a drop in private savings, but it won't go on forever."

Palestinian and foreign analysts also have blamed Israeli

policies for the isolation of Gaza residents from their natural economic partners, the 1.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank. Some 16,000 Palestinian businessmen—from Gaza and the West Bank—have permits to enter Israel every day, but only 800 are allowed to travel freely between Gaza and the West Bank.

The Oslo peace accords offered a blueprint for what amounted to a free-trade zone between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. But what has evolved in practice is very different. Israel does not charge duty on products from Gaza or the West Bank, but its stringent security checks result in delays, higher transport costs and uncompetitive goods.

"I've seen them X-ray ice cream in the summer, taking it out of the truck box by box," said Salem Ajluni, an American economist working for the United Nations in Gaza. "I've seen eggs scanned by metal detectors."

According to Eizenstat, Palestinian entrepreneurs have complained it is cheaper to ship goods from the West Bank to Venice than from the West Bank to Gaza. As a result, Gaza makes do with more expensive goods produced in Israel.

"Now we are living in a very high-security jail," said Awni

Hasham, who owns a business that makes and sells office furniture in Gaza City. "We live in a very closed area, paying every penny we have for electricity, water, and a place to live. This jail is the responsibility of both sides—the Palestinian Authority and Israel. They put us in this situation."

At no point in recent history—not before Israel captured Gaza in 1967 and began its military occupation, nor after, including since Israel withdrew its troops from Gaza four years ago and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority took over—has Gaza had an economic development plan. Lacking natural resources, Gaza languished as a supplier of cheap labor to Israel.

That was supposed to change in 1993. Marriott made plans to build a 200-room hotel, an investment of \$80 million that would showcase Gaza's spectacular beach. Calvin Klein expressed interest in building a factory.

But private investors became scarce as the peace process began to fray. Marriott froze its hotel plan after doing some landscaping. Calvin Klein seemed to disappear.

"For years, we were asleep and dreaming of the future and our freedom," said Hasham. "And suddenly we woke up to see the future as it is. And it's not so good."

Queen inaugurates peace corps

AMMAN. (Petra)—Her Majesty Queen Noor and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton inaugurated, Tuesday, the new headquarters of the Peace Corps in Washington DC. The Peace Corps was launched by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 as a two-year program for American volunteers to "serve their country and the cause of peace by living and working in the developing world." The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship by providing volunteers who contribute to the social, economic and human development of countries; to provide better understanding of Americans among the people whom volunteers serve; and to strengthen Americans' understanding about the world and its people.

In her remarks, Queen Noor quoted the prophet Mubammad, who said "the best of men are those who are useful to other," noting the "Peace Corps volunteers...give two years of their lives being useful to others in ways both practical and imaginative." According to the Queen, peace corps volunteers "are currently working all over Jordan. In mutually enriching partnerships with government and non-governmental organizations, on a wide range of projects including eco-tourism development, the marketing of traditional crafts, and care for the hearing impaired, orphans and the mentally disabled."

A second group of volunteers will soon begin working with projects ranging from the management of a medicinal herbs enterprise, to research into child health and development and prevention of abuse. Queen Noor noted that "lessons from our region show that peace must be built between peoples. It derives from understanding, trust and a sense of working toward a shared destiny. It arises only out of mutual and equitable exchange of skills, of ideas, of cultural values." She emphasized that the important role Peace Corps volunteers are playing by "going where they are invited, bringing open minds, dedication and enthusiasm, living and working side by side with their hosts, and returning with new perspectives to share with those at home, are among the best examples of how that peace will be achieved."

Mrs. Hillary Clinton in her speech said that it was a privilege to celebrate this occasion with Queen Noor, adding that their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor are "two of the finest people you will find anywhere in the world. They are great leaders and strong friends." Mrs. Clinton expressed her pride in the Peace Corps' World Wise Schools program describing it as a unique global education program that broadens the geographic and cultural horizons of American students through their interaction with currently serving and returned Peace Corps volunteers. She said that in the past six years, she has been honored to meet with volunteers on her trips abroad and at the White House, adding that their enthusiasm and dedication infused her with energy and inspiration.

Jordan represents the 132nd country where Peace Corps volunteers have served since its founding. Volunteers work with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation in eight of its comprehensive development programs, the Ministry of Social Development, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, Jordan River Society for Development and Queen Aila Fund. They continue the tradition of the Peace Corps in the Arab World, which has provided humanitarian assistance in Libya, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, and Tunisia since 1962. Volunteers currently serve in Mantri, along with their most recent postings in Morocco and Jordan, working as partners on important projects in education, health, agriculture, the environment, women's micro-enterprise initiatives, and many others.

Currently there are approximately 6,100 Peace Corps volunteers serving 85 countries worldwide. More than 151,000 Americans have joined the Peace Corps since its founding, providing assistance in education, health and nutrition, agriculture, environment, and small business development.

Former Peace Corps volunteer Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, First Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver, members of the Senate and the Congress attended the inauguration ceremony.

JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, sends the condolences of His Majesty King Hussein to the Al Agarmeh clan, Tuesday. Sergeant Mohammad Shaher Al Agarmeh died after he was fired at during a car chase. (See below for more details)

Attack on pharmacies

A disturbing trend may be! Last week two pharmacies in Washi Al Tal Street were attacked by armed robbers. The attack came after midnight when a number of armed men came into the pharmacy and demanded money. They stole JD 300 from one of the chemists. Police, soon knew about the raid and a car chase ensued, when one policeman was killed and another injured. However, the two men were eventually apprehended and are now in police custody. Sources say the two men raided another supermarket in the same area. Vice President of the Jordan Pharmaceutical Association (JPA) Abdel Raheem Issa said that this was a disturbing trend, and that the council of the Association will meet to see what can be done to curb the rising attacks on drug stores. Last March, a similar attack resulted in the death of one chemist and the injury of another. Meanwhile the JPA has called on pharmacies to pay their dues to the Association. About 1300 have been told either to pay up or face the possibility of suspension.

Cancer

Cancer is on the increase, or so everybody keeps saying. Not so according to Dr Samir Al Kayed, director of the National Register in the Ministry of Health. There is at present 36,682 registered cancer patients in the country. Dr Al Kayed says that this is within the regional average, and certainly below the rates in the developed countries. In the surrounding countries there are 74 cancer patients to every 100,000 people, the figure goes up to between 200-300 to every 100,000 in developed industrial countries. But there are other revealing figures. Al Kayed says that most cancer patients registered in the country are Jordanians, although there are 380 foreigners. The distribution of cancer victims across the Kingdom's governorates is between 20-74 cases to every 100,000. In recent weeks there has been a lot of talk about Ajloun having the highest rate of cancer patients in the country. Not true says Dr Al Kayed. He adds that preliminary statistics show that the number of cancer patients for every 100,000 in Ajloun is 39.

Press Association

Jordan's Press Law Association (JPLA) has been given the Royal seal of approval, and it is now being printed in the Official Gazette. According to the new law, elections to the presidency and council of the JPLA will now be held next April. Elections will be across the board and voting for editors, newspaper owners, and those of the Petra News Agency, which traditionally had three seats each has been abolished. Employees in the news sections of radio and television now have the right to become members of the JPLA.

Municipalities

Financial help could be on the way. The Ministry of Municipalities has said that officials are studying ways of giving some of the revenues from the rates in the selling and buying of land to the municipal and rural councils. One of these ways is to allow the councils to collect taxes and rates on lands and buildings, something which save them paying at least 10 percent to the Ministry of Finance. It is suggested that the employees of the councils could themselves collect the dues.

More charities

More charitable societies have been established last month. Despite the tough stand the Ministry of Social Development is taking on charitable societies, four more have been established. They are in Amman, Madaba, Mafrag, and Jordan Valley.



His Majesty King Hussein receives Chief of the Royal Court, Jawad Al Anani, at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, USA, Saturday.

Early parliamentary elections could be an option

By Star Staff Writer

THE RECENT call for early parliamentary elections is a reflection of the general feeling of discontent felt among voters. This is especially so since the last elections were held less than a year ago, in November 1997. The performance of the members of the Lower House is something to be desired people are saying.

"I don't think Parliament has performed its duties at all well. We only need to look at the different laws which the Lower House passed during its sessions," Dr Saeed Thyab, secretary general of the Popular Unity Party, said.

"The Press and Publications Law, which Parliament endorsed recently, was a staggering blow to the freedom of expression in the Kingdom, and to the credibility of some of the deputies." According to Dr Thyab, "the main obstacle in voting is the 'one man, one vote' law, which constitutes the backbone of the parliamentary election law at the moment."

At the forefront of the call for new elections was the president of the Jordan Lawyers Association, Hussein Mjalli. During a recent press conference, Mjalli said it was time to have a new parliament. "With the endorsement of the Press and Publications Law—taking us back to the era of martial law, rather than forward into the 21st Century—the present parliament has shown itself to be ineffectual," Mjalli said.

In turn Lower House deputy Mansour Seif Al Deen Morad found it irrational to call for new elections. "There is no need for such elections."

"In this period we have to rebuild the economy and look for the best means to solve the national crises which concern the whole nation," Morad, who won in last year's elections for Russeifa, continued.

"I think what is more important is to activate the legislations which guarantee the par-



Abu Bakr

participation of all the institutions of the society," Jamil Abu Baker, Spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood, said.

He told *The Star* that calling for new elections will be a waste of time and effort if they are to be held within the same circumstances. It's worth mentioning that the Brotherhood was the first organization from the opposition to call for the boycott of the elections.

However, the man in the street does seem to support the need for new elections.

"I wish that elections would be held every year to avoid watching some representatives who have not assumed the tasks they were elected for. After the parliamentary sessions which I used to watch on TV, I became very disappointed, commented one Ammanite who preferred to remain anonymous. "Today, I rarely glance at the headlines, he added in a non-chalant manner."

"During the elections campaign deputies come to you to inform you and listen to your needs," he continued. "Nowadays, some of our deputies can't be seen let alone handle the different issues effectively," the man continued.

"Parliament is helpless and weak, no one is contented with their performance," commented Dr Kathim Awad.



Murad

owner of a pharmacy in Balqa.

"The present parliament is based on the tribal representation, which makes it retreat in



Thyab

front of the higher commands and influential groups," Dr Awad added. "What we need is radical changes in policy and not of the individuals."

Football hooliganism

In his column in *Ad Dusiour*, Abdallah Al Khateeb condemned the latest football riots. He was particularly worried about the acclamations from one team of supporters during the match, because they were "hostile", "prejudiced", "distasteful" and "provocative" to the other team. In his opinion what made matters worse was the use of "geographical" and "regional" differences in their hails of encouragement. Al Khateeb's main focus was the issue of national unity, which is threatened by such actions.

Jordan is made up of different nationalities. By ridiculing other people's cultures, he says, they jeopardize the integration of the nation. "If sportsmanship cannot rule on the field, then we should turn these grounds into productive facilities that benefit the nation, instead of threatening its unity."

No politics!

In his article in *Al Rai*, Majeed Asfour draws the attention of the readers to the role of professional associations and what they can do to improve the country's economy. In the past, he says, the professional associations main concern was political, for they were only interested in representing the views of their members. Now after the resumption of the democratic process, and the return of parliamentary life, associations should take a backward step from politics and concentrate on their economic role. Members of professional associations would like to see their organization adopt a more active role in eliminating unemployment, and provide jobs to improve the productive capacity of the economy, moving it away from over-employment. Professional associations have the resources to finance many projects. Instead of wasting money on election campaigns, Asfour says, he would like to see this money put into projects which are useful for the country and the economy.

Sub-editor wanted

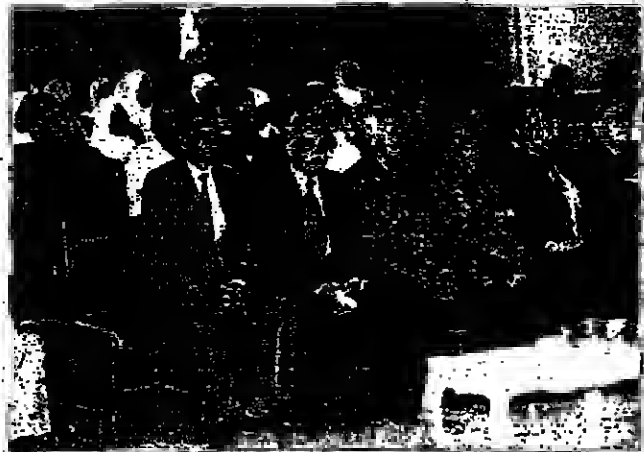
A textual editor (sub-editor) is required to work for an English-language weekly newspaper in Amman. Must be a native speaker. Duties include editing local, regional and international stories. A journalistic background is preferred. Those interested please telephone 5686121 (ext. 344) or send C/V to fax no 5667170.

Palestinian cause receives timely boost

AMMAN, (Star)—This week, the Khalil Al Rahman Charitable Society organized a solidarity conference in support of the Palestinian cause in Hebron and Jerusalem. All the participants made a pledge to protect the historical rights of the Palestinians in Jerusalem and Hebron, and reiterated that Palestine would forever be considered as Arab territory.

The conference was held on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Oslo agreement. Sulaiman Amr, secretary general of Al Mustaqbal party, stressed that, "the Palestinian condition would not remain the same forever," and assured his Palestinian brothers that "the Jordanian people will never forget the Palestinian cause."

The general mood among the delegates was pessimistic; they could not see peace between Israel and the Arab world, if the current status quo is maintained. Hussein Mjalli,



A view from the conference

president of the Jordanian Lawyers Association, said that the holy places in Hebron and Jerusalem could not be protected properly, if the political situation remains as it is. His solution is to create a "Greater union among the Arab nations of the Middle East to confront

Israel on a solid, committed basis. Sobhi Goshen, the conference spokesman, said that, "Israel" has steadfastly increased the number of Jewish settlements around Hebron and Jerusalem, and that the Jewish state is determined to

eradicate the Palestinian call for independence. "Both Hebron and Jerusalem are holy places, dear to the hearts of all Muslims and Christians, and their continued occupation is at the center of the Arab-Israeli struggle," Mr Goshen stressed, "and the only effective solution—the one that will give the greatest amount of stability to the region—is for these territories to be returned to the Arab body."

At the end of the conference, all the delegates agreed on a final statement, which reiterated the Arab identity of Palestine. Delegates expressed their appreciation of their Palestinian brothers for their steadfastness in the face of overwhelming problems, and they thanked all the Arab and Islamic nations, bodies and institutions who have supported—materially and morally—the cause of Palestine over the years.

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ROYAL JORDANIAN
Reflecting the Change



Our Say...

The task before the new government

THE GOVERNMENT of Dr Fayez Al Tarawneh will submit its program to Parliament this week and accordingly seek a vote of confidence. The program is expected to deal with the various political, economic and social issues that Jordan faces at this stage of its development. It is no secret that the task before the Tarawneh government will not be easy.

While there is much to do on the political front, especially as the peace process continues to falter and tension heightens between Israel and the PNA, the main challenge for Jordan lies in reviving its economy and addressing domestic ills.

For the majority of Jordanians a better standard of living, along with new employment opportunities and higher income, remain the most important priorities of any government. Previous administrations have submitted programs promising to revive the economy, fight poverty and unemployment and raise the standard of living of Jordanians. But as we all know by now growth figures and various other statistics and indicators have not reflected a change for the better. As we approach the conclusion of the economic adjustment program, which has brought a cut in public spending, a suspension in government subsidies and major reforms including the privatization of public companies, we are entitled to know if our sacrifices have achieved the desirable ends and if we are finally on the road to economic recovery and prosperity.

The government of Dr Tarawneh will not be able to reverse the economy overnight. It is not expected to do so anyway. But it must at least focus its attention on the dire needs of middle and low income sectors of the society, both of which have suffered as a result of economic restructuring and sluggish growth. For many Jordanians life has become more difficult in the past four to five years. It is those Jordanians, who make up the majority, whose needs and requirements that the government must address.

There is no easy panacea to our economic woes. In the absence of a political settlement across the river and within the region, the economic fortunes of the countries of the Levant are not expected to improve. Foreign investments need political stability and sound infrastructure to begin to pour into this part of the world. Economic summits and various other meetings and conferences will not do the trick as we have learned from past experiences.

While we wait for a political breakthrough on the Palestinian-Israeli track, our government must launch a short-term economic package that aims at restoring confidence in the economy. While this is easier said than done, Jordan badly needs a dose of self-confidence. It can still revive itself by utilizing on its own resources and by repackaging itself to interested investors.

Political and social stability are also an important objective of the coming phase. The young and able government of Dr Tarawneh should focus on the domestic front in order to address some of the ailments that beset the Jordanian society today.

Five years since the Oslo agreement What's on and what's off the table?

By Star Staff Writer

WHEN YOU think back to the signing of the Oslo agreement—five years ago this week—between the Palestinians and Israelis, and realize what a dramatic psychological and ideological breakthrough it was.

The year that followed 13 September 1993 was full of hope and expectation. The famous handshake on the lawn of the White House was symbolic of the peace that was to ensue between the Palestinians and Israelis.

These agreements were a turning point in the Israeli official way of thinking, as at long last they recognized the Palestinian people's rights.

However, no one can deny the tremendous loss of time that Palestinians had to endure, and are still enduring, because of the obstinate policies of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

As time passes, and the 4 May implementation deadline comes within view, both the Palestinians and Israelis are this week looking back to the 13 September with mixed feelings. "Mr Netanyahu has not found much to celebrate, but reminding his people all the time of the victims that have fallen because of what he calls 'Palestinian terrorism,'" said Uriah Al Rentawi, a columnist at *Ad Dussour*.

Palestinians, meanwhile, seem to be more optimistic, awaiting the formation of their state, to be announced next May by the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. "Such a state, if it happens, will demolish the Jewish dream of a Greater Israel, from the Nile to Euphrates, and return some of the lost Arab dignity," continued Al Rentawi.

However Ahmed Quraia, leader of the Palestinian Legislative Council, has another point of view.

"When Israeli officials say that the Oslo agreements are



Famous handshake! Clinton, Rabin (now deceased) and Arafat on the White House lawn in Sept. 13 1993.

dead, they are actually expressing their wishes—wanting to exploit the situation and hinder every move to revive the peace process," said Quraia, who is also affectionately known as Abu Ala.

He gives credit to Chairman Arafat who, "proceeding with the Oslo agreements, gave birth to the infant Palestinian public institutions, underpinned by modern, civilized and democratic values which we all have grown to respect." He said that these things are not respected by Israeli officials, and were the reason for the stalemate in the peace process. This also explains the recent visit of US envoy Dennis Ross to the area.

Ross' latest visit, which failed, again, to achieve a breakthrough, was marked by the killing of two brothers, Imad and Adel Awadallah, by the Israeli security forces.

Both were Hamas' top cadres who organized many suicide bombings inside Israel. In response to Israeli intransigence, the level of political, extremism increased on the Arab side.

Yasser Za'atreh, a critic of the Oslo accord, said in his column in *Ad Dussour*, "We should ask Mr Abu Ala if Mr Netanyahu is able to make a better agreement for Israel, separate from the 'current Oslo one.' Za'atreh adds that Netanyahu is 'well-known for his blackmail and inducing smiles'.

The second scheduled redeployment of Israeli forces was due to take place last year but postponed because of differences on the required percentage of withdrawal in the West Bank. Israelis kept stalling for an immediate benefit in ties with Israel, is music to the ears of the Likudists, who say

that is proof that the Arabs don't really want peace with the Israel, and really "want to push them into the sea."

"The real obstacle to peace is not in the texts of the agreements, but in [Israel's] extremist and fundamental way of dealing with the peace process, which denies the other side [Palestinians] its justifiable living rights on their own land," says Mr Abu Ala.

"The Palestinian state will be a grave yard for Israel's belief in an alternative homeland," stresses Al Rentawi, who states that the past 50 years of expulsions, house demolitions and oppression will come to an end by the return of all emigrants to their promised homeland.

Abu Ala urged his people to, "Forget about dates and deadlines, and keep the hope of seeing their own independent state, as soon as it is possible."

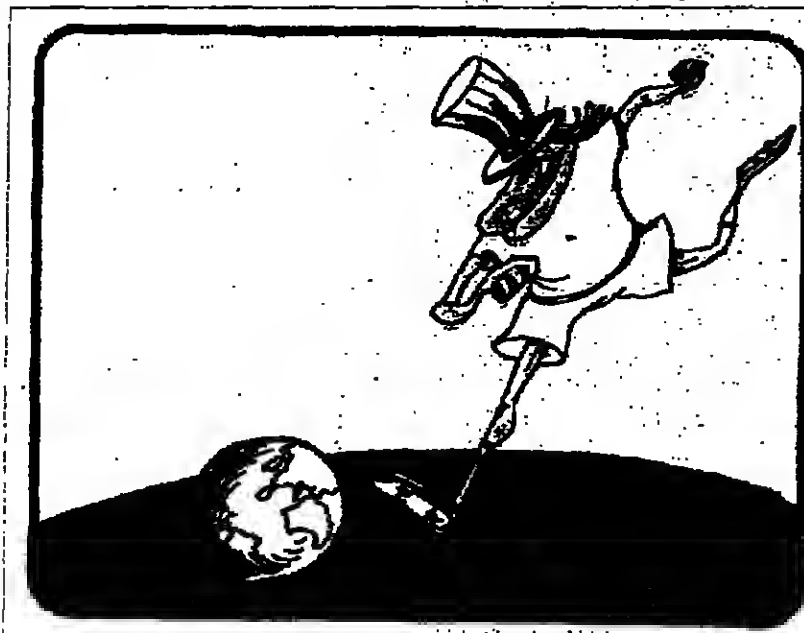
Uncle Sam on the grand chessboard

The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geopolitical Imperatives by Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, 1997, 256 pages

BESTSELLING AUTHOR and former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski is considered by Democrats and Republicans alike to be one of the nation's premier geopolitical strategists. In *The Grand Chessboard*, he offers a bold and provocative new global vision for preserving and extending American preeminence in the 21st century.

Bernard Gwertzman of the *New York Times Book Review*, Brzezinski has now stated and restated his concerns. His books are there for any political leader to use as material for future policy declarations. But it is difficult in the current situation to imagine much of a competition to take up Brzezinski's ideas, however well they are argued here.

At its best, *The Grand Chessboard* makes permanent contributions to the national debate over American foreign policy and power says Walter Russell Mead of the *Los Angeles Times Sunday Book Review*. But he adds that at its worst, it demonstrates the need for contemporary statesmen and political thinkers to immerse themselves more deeply in the rich tradition of Anglo-American strategic thought that brought first Britain and now the United States to global preeminence at an astonishingly low cost.



Boligan/La Crónica de Hoy/Mexico City

of impact. The former national security advisor is still a believer in geopolitics after all these years writes the *Kirkus Reviews*.

Like most foreign-policy aficionados weaned on the Cold War, Brzezinski (*Out of Control*, 1993) has been forced by the disintegration of the Soviet Union to broaden his perspective—but not very far. He sees the US as the only global superpower, but inability to maintain its hegemony indefinitely means that "geopolitical skill" is essential. To what end is not specified beyond the vague shaping of "a truly cooperative global community" that is in "the fundamental interests of humankind" but in this genre, goals are commonly assumed rather than examined. In any case, Brzezinski casts Eurasia as the playing field upon which the world's fate is determined and analyzes the possibilities in Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Balkans (interpreted broadly), and the Far East. Like a grandmaster in chess, he plots his strategy several moves in advance, envisioning a three-stage development.



Geopolitical pluralism must first be promoted to defuse challenges to America, then compatible international partners must be developed to encourage cooperation under American leadership, and finally the actual sharing of international political responsibility can be considered. The twin poles of this strategy are a united Europe in the West and China in the East; the central regions are more problematic and, for Brzezinski, not as critical in constructing a stable balance of power. This updated version of East-West geopolitics is worth taking seriously but it is also an amazing example of how a perspective can be revised without actually being rethought.

Middle East Beat by Khairi Janbek Dual derailment

IT HAD originally started as dual containment policy of Iran and Iraq by the USA and its allies. Today such commitment is increasingly looking like derailment. Iran, which had been once considered as a radical state, is assuming the post of a moderating power, and attempting to end the chaos in Afghanistan. However it is facing a new force which seems far more radical in the eyes of the international community. Of course the Taliban has a grip on most of the Afghan territory, if not all, and as a result, the chaos may end by the victory of one major combatant group or another—though in this case it will probably be the Taliban. Ironically, it had been Iran that was held accountable in the past for the various incidents that contravened international law.

Now it is Iran that is the victim of international illegality. The outcome is that over 200,000 Iranian troops are preparing for war at the border with Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Taliban are heading for a major victory, and may soon be sending a delegation to the UN, to take their place among the other delegates of the international community.

The scene would be set for Afghanistan to defy aggression against its sovereignty, whilst Iran would claim it's efforts were purely peace oriented.

Will the Taliban continue the bloodshed, or will Iran take note of history, and not fall into the same trap that British colonialism and Soviet expansionism had fallen into before?

The temptations must be resisted, but admittedly, vendetta is an overwhelming emotion. Perhaps other methods can be exploited by Iran, to avoid the escalation of violence.

Turkey is trying to play a mediating role, so perhaps, there is a chance to settle the Iranian-Afghan problem, before increasing statistics of Muslim refugees around the world.

The other party to the dual containment duo is Iraq. Under the current circumstances, it is refusing to cooperate with UNSCOM, and so the UN has decided to suspend the review of sanctions.

Yet, both Iraq and the UN have offered each other carrots, as well as using the stick. The UN had declared its intention to review the record of Iraq's cooperation once Iraq allows the UN search teams to operate, while Iraq still holds the same option if it deems it necessary to use in the case of looting its bet on the favorable new circumstances.

For in the midst of all this, is a major American company with a pioneering investment history that intends to move to Iraq carrying its regional business with it. This is an encouraging sign that sanctions may well be ending, if not now, at least in the very near future.

However, the current American administration is showing signs of disarray, with increased pressure on President Clinton. He will have less time to concentrate on America's international agenda now, and will be concentrating more on staying in power.

Another dimension to this affair is Russia, who recently looked favorably towards Iraq and is now in a better position to translate its outlook into action with the advent of Mr Primakov to the prime ministry. This is because of his long standing friendship with the various political personalities in Iraq.

All in all, those factors are very important in the calculations of the Iraqi leadership, and are likely to stiffen Baghdad's position until sanctions come to an end with a bang or whimper. The interesting part is that this game could continue to go around in circles.

Determined by forces on the international arena—outside the control of both Iraq and the UN—dual containment is "looking more like 'PASSA Double', with the same apparent effects."



Cuban President Fidel Castro (L) talks to Lupe Velez, wife of deceased official revolutionary hero Antonio Nunez Jimenez, at his funeral in a Havana cemetery. Nunez fought as a captain in Castro's guerrilla army which won the 1959 Cuban Revolution, and later became a well-known geographer on the island.

Reuters

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Business scene

■ The United Nations Sanctions Committee (UNSCOM) approved 13 contracts worth \$21 million in favor of Jordanian companies, allowing them to export their products to Iraq, in light of the fourth stage of the oil for food deal formula. A well informed source at the Ministry of Industry and Trade said that 22 contracts have been awarded during this stage, at a value of \$28.5 million. Among the new approvals are exports of toilet soap, fat, detergents, cheese and pharmaceuticals. In all, UNSCOM has endorsed contracts worth \$333 million.

■ The 17 insurance companies in Jordan generated pre-tax net profits of JD 4.53 million last year, compared with JD 4.78 million in 1996, showing a decline of 5.28 percent. Net insurance revenues also recorded a fall, 2.51 percent from last year. Total assets, at the end 1997, stood at JD 120.58 million, against JD 121.60 million the previous year, a drop of 0.83 percent from 1996. Insurance net premiums—after deducting the reinsurance percentage—were JD 8.8 million in 1997 compared with JD 11.89 million in 1996, whilst revenues stood at JD 13.85 million in 1997, compared with JD 14.21 million in 1996.

■ The cabinet has recently agreed to provide investment facilities for Arab Potash Co. and the Jordanian Dead Sea Salts Co., to establish an international company at Ghor Al Safi. The company will produce chloride and calcium bromide from the "Dead Sea" water. The joint venture will help expand the mining base and diversify production. Total investment in the venture is estimated at about \$100 million, and will create 900 new job opportunities at the site.

■ The value of goods entering the Free Zone areas in Jordan was estimated at JD 244 million for the first six months of this year. About JD 137.5 million worth of goods went through the Zarqa Free Zone, this is more than 56 percent of the total value.

Jordanian exporters stress importance of Saudi market

By Ihsan Sadeq
Star staff writer

THERE IS no doubt that the Gulf markets play a vital role in supporting Jordanian exports, which in turn provides badly needed revenue for the Kingdom.

Jordan's trade exchange with the Gulf countries suffered greatly following the Gulf war in 1990, but recently, there have been signs that the level of exchange has returned to its pre-1990 levels.

The Saudi market, for instance, is proving essential for the promotion of local produce, and stronger economic relations between the two countries can bode well for the future.

Realizing the importance of Saudi market—second in rank after Iraq—the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centers Company (JEDCO) organized a seminar recently to allow Jordanian manufacturers to become acquainted with the conditions necessary before exporting to Saudi Arabia. The one-day symposium which was co-sponsored by the Amman Shipping and Transport Co. (AST Co.) highlighted the technical standards and specifications required by the Saudi Standards Organization

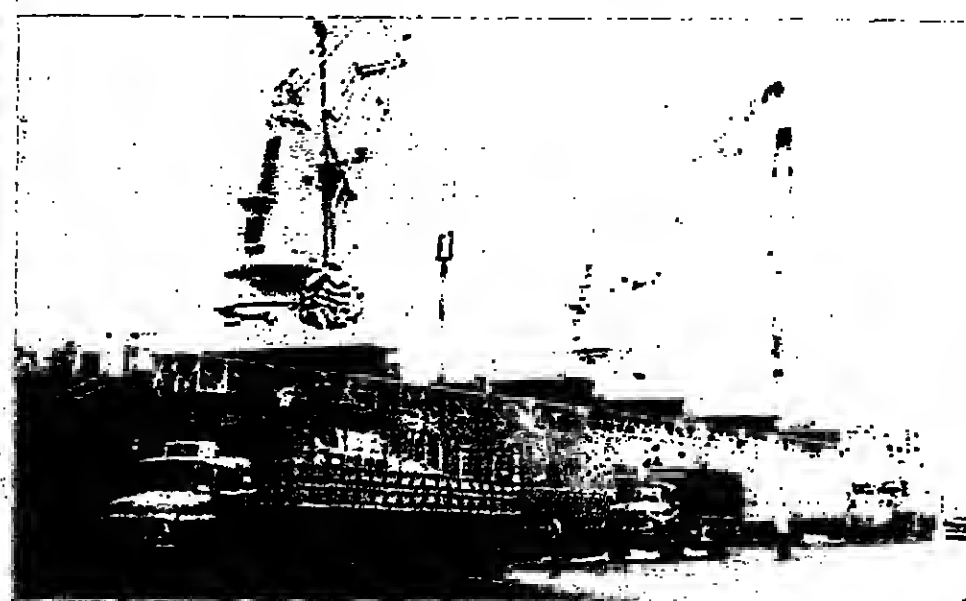


Ibrahim Naouri.

(SASO), before allowing goods to enter into Saudi Arabia.

To facilitate the process of inspection and survey on Jordanian goods exported to the Saudi markets, the Interlink Testing Services (ITS) has appointed an office for SASO through the AST Co.

AST's Managing Director Ibrahim Naouri told *The Star*, "The establishment of this office is meant to solve the problems facing Jordanian manufacturers interested in the Saudi market, and it is authorized to carry out all inspection and survey certificates and documents which were previously done through the ITS regional office in Sharqa, United Arab Emirates."



Jordanian exports could be in for a pleasant surprise

Authorized to provide all documents required by the Saudi government, Jordanian exporters will save time and effort by avoiding delays in the arrival of goods arising from customs and inspection. This is all included in the International Conformity Certification Program (ICCP) highlighted by

Conrad De Souza, SASO/ICCP Technical Coordinator, who told representatives of 150 Jordanian industrial companies attending the seminar that the program includes pre-shipment instructions related to inspection and tests concluded on consigned cargo.

There are 66 items in the ICCP, and includes items such as toys, electronics, electrical instruments, cars, and chemicals," Mr Naouri said.

For his part, Mr Ian H. Betenson, general manager of Foreign Trade Supervision (FTS), said that the Amman office was founded in cooperation with JEDCO and AST, to simplify the process of exporting goods to Saudi Arabia in compliance with SASO specifications and standards conditions.

Betenson, who is also the general manager of the SASO regional office in Sharqa, stressed that the standard of the quality of the Jordanian industrial products is so advanced that they can compete on many levels.

The first of its kind in Jordan, the seminar focused on providing free access for the country's local industrial exporters to all international markets. The challenge for quality is essential, since we are moving towards the establishment of a free trade zone area by the

beginning of the year 2005—as the world becomes an ever shrinking village.

"After trade was liberalized, the challenge today is the technical obstacles and not the customs ones, so we intend to go through the EU-Jordanian partnership agreement, and we are planning to organize seminars on regular basis in order to make local manufacturers aware of the importance of standards and high quality in upgrading our output and enhancing domestic exports," said Mr Moayad Al Samman, director of Export Development Department at JEDCO.

Mr Samman added that the seminar held at JEDCO last week is a continuation of the activities sponsored by the company to promote industrial products and help Jordanian exporters overcome difficulties

facing their exports to the outside markets, mainly the neighboring ones." He also shares Mr Naouri's view that the accredited office in Amman will save exporters time and effort.

Ms Schrab Arrar, attending the seminar on behalf of Leizer Industrial Group, which manufactures gas lighters, told *The Star* that as a company interested in promoting its exports to Saudi Arabia, "We look forward to comply with the requirements of the international standards conformity program."

Available data about the volume of the trade exchange between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, indicates that Jordanian exports to Saudi Arabia totaled JD 45.3 million at the end of last June, while imports were at JD 53.8 million.

Business Chronicle

Jordanian private sector denies cooperation with Israel

THE AIM of the annual Middle East and North Africa (MENA) summit is to strengthen ties between all nations in the Arab World, by lifting economic embargoes and consolidating commercial ties.

However, since 1994 and the signing of the peace treaty, Israel has been participating in the MENA summits. Some Arab nations have voiced strong disapproval to this new relationship, whilst others have gone further and actually boycotted the summit. The common viewpoint is that the convoluted inter-Arab relations is more important than normalizing ties with Israel.

The MENA conference, which was convened in Qatar last year, was a prime example. Egypt and Syria boycotted the event, protesting against the participation of an Israeli delegation. Some analysts said that Qatar would be the last MENA summit, because of the rising tensions in the region. The situation has not changed much since then. A recent Israeli radio broadcast said that a joint Jordanian-Israeli Chamber of Trade had been established to enhance commercial and economic cooperation between the two countries. This was met by uproar from leaders of the Jordanian Businessmen Federation. To further reassure people, the Chamber of Trade and Industry felt it was necessary to completely deny the news, saying it was "false" and "baseless."

However, the idea is not new. The establishment of a joint regional business council comprising Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Israel was first proposed during the Amman MENA summit of 1995.

Speaking on behalf of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Trade (FICT), Mr Haidar Morad denied that pressure had been imposed on the private sector to approve the formation of a joint regional council. "The Federation's stance was clear from the beginning. I think that the news is targeted at distorting the image of the private sector in Jordan, but our economic relations are dependent upon progress in the peace process. We are always keen to bolster trade exchange and investment cooperation with the Palestinians," Morad added.

A similar stance was made by the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA). Mr Hamdi Tabbaa reiterated that "the Association refuses to meet with any Israeli delegation, so long as it does not respect its commitments to the peace accords, and continues to interfere with the free and easy exchange of goods between Jordan and the Palestinian territories."

The Chairman of Amman Chamber of Industry, Mr Khalid Abu Hassan, also felt it was necessary to deny the allegation in the radio broadcast. "The report on Israeli Radio is null and void, and we stress that priority should be given to inter-Arab relations, especially with our Palestinian brothers," Hassan said.

The new Grand Hyatt (Amman) Soft opening on 1st December

AMMAN—On 1 December the Grand Hyatt (Amman)—the Middle East's first Grand Hyatt—will open its doors to the public. It will be a welcome addition to the tourism and business infrastructure of Amman, and will be warmly received by the Jordanian community.

The hotel is located in the heart of Amman's business and diplomatic district, with good links to the Exhibition and Conference Centre.

Perched on a slope, the hotel has a dazzling panoramic view of the city.

The hotel's remarkable facade is graced with roses, intricate designs and a stunning entrance gate—all designed to reflect the ancient city of Petra. Exquisite works of art adorn walls and spaces, imparting the rich heritage of local artists and craftsmen throughout the hotel.

During the soft opening, the hotel will have approximately 120 elegant guestrooms and three food and beverage outlets in its inspiring lobby. The Grand Cafe offers a splendid selection of popular international dishes, and local favorites are served throughout the day at this panoramic indoor/outdoor cafe.

At the L'Incontro, you can watch the Italian specialties being cooked before your eyes in the woodburning oven and exhibition kitchen—a showcase for luscious Mediterranean cuisine. The restaurant also features a charming outdoor terrace and a private dining room for business and social dinners.

At the Oryx Bar, you can relax to the strains of live piano music, with a long cocktail or fine cognac, all in front of a cozy fireplace.



A view of the Hyatt Amman

By January 1999, 316 elegant guestrooms will be available, including 9 Junior Suites, 4 Executive Suites, 2 Prince Suites and one Royal Suite. All the rooms are luxuriously appointed and designed to provide supreme comfort and modern conveniences, including individual climate control, direct-dial phones with voice mail fax line/modem points, 31 channel satellite TV, hair-dryers and valuable safes.

The two floors of the Regency Club accommodation form a "hotel within a hotel" offering the highest level of personalized hospitality and service. Guests may relax in the private lounge, while relishing the magnificent views.

freshly baked bread. The Grand Hyatt (Amman) offers a variety of versatile meeting, banqueting and conference facilities unsurpassed in the city, and is ideal for business or social occasions.

A 970 square metre Grand Ballroom seats up to 1000 guests and is divisible into three separate, soundproof sections. The ballroom opens into a lush garden courtyard providing a quiet area for pre-function activities. A junior ballroom, meeting and boardrooms serve as flexible venues for a multitude of occasions.

Club Olympus—the sophisticated health club and spa—houses a fully equipped gym, aerobics studio, massage and pampering treatment rooms, sauna, Jacuzzi, indoor and outdoor pool.

The Business Centre has expert staff to help its guests to stay in touch with a wide range of communications, secretarial and support services.

Grand Hyatt (Amman) will accommodate business, leisure and incentive travelers from around the world, while at the same time it will become the meeting place for local Jordanian people and expatriates alike. We invite you to come and experience the Hyatt international way of hospitality.

There are 178 Hyatt hotels and resorts around the world. Hyatt International, through its subsidiaries, operates 34 hotels and 17 resorts in 32 countries, with additional 34 hotels under development. Hyatt Hotels Corporation, a separate company, operates 107 hotels and resorts in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. Hyatt is also accessible through the Internet at www.hyatt.com.

OLE Holdings hosts Land Rover's fiftieth challenge team

LAST 1 August, a breathtaking expedition from the home of Land Rover reeled off. Using specially designed and highly distinctive Land Rover Freelander, the Fifty 50 challenge team began the first of four separate legs from the factory gates in Solihull. The team, made up of 30 volunteers, all from very diverse walks of life within the Rover Group has spent 18 months prior to the expedition planning what will be a marathon 20,000 mile journey starting at the U.K. and finishing in South Africa.

The fifty 50 challenge team has the combined aims of celebrating Land Rover's 50th anniversary, showing what the Freelander can do and at the

same time raising a substantial sum of money for UNICEF.

For weeks, the separate leg teams have been attempting to reach their challenge target of 50 countries in 50 days, ranging from the emotive beauty of Norway's Northern cape to the blistering heat of Saudi Arabia and finally completing the challenge in Cape Town. The teams have made use of every aspect of their intensive training for the event.

In Jordan, Ole Holdings Ltd. hosted the Land Rover team and sponsored a humanitarian campaign to raise funds for UNICEF for the benefit of underprivileged children worldwide.

Jordan was the 35th stop for

the fifty 50 Challenge Team. The team arrived in Jordan from Syria on Friday, September 4th and left the next day. After visiting several countries in Europe, the team visited Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates before moving on to Africa.

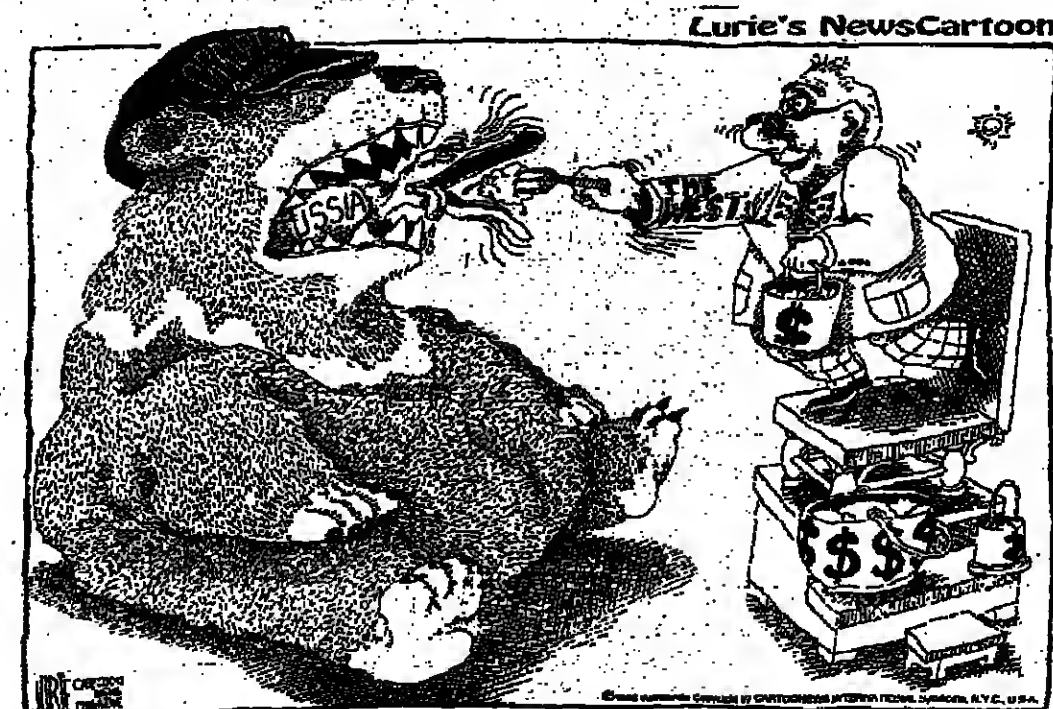
The Fifty 50 challenge is fully supported by Land Rover and will have local international press and broadcast coverage.

So enthusiasts can keep up with the later stages of the challenge, Land Rover has a website on www.landrover.com/LR50.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 16 September

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SP	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEM	0.3667	0.3685
LFR (100)	0.0419	0.0421



Lurie's NewsCartoon



A guided tour for journalists

Hamas leaders slain by Israeli security forces

By Rebecca Trounson

TAIYIBA, West Bank—Two leaders of the militant Hamas movement who were described as "master terrorists" by Israel were shot to death by Israeli security forces in a daylight raid on an isolated West Bank hide-out, last week.

The men, brothers Adel and Imad Awadallah, were leaders of the secretive military wing of the Islamic group and had been sought by Israel for planning and participating in attacks that killed five Israelis and wounded more than 50 others. Adel Awadallah, 31, had topped Israel's most wanted list in the West Bank.

Israeli officials said they hoped that the deaths of the Awadallahs, who were slain last Thursday but whose identities were not announced until the next day, will cripple, at least for a while, Hamas' ability to launch attacks against Israel. The group is violently opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and has tried to scuttle it with suicide bombings that have claimed dozens of Israeli lives in the last five years.

But Hamas immediately vowed to avenge the killings with violence that will shake Israel "like an earthquake." Leaflets circulated at a Hamas rally in the Gaza Strip said it would retaliate with attacks reminiscent of a devastating series of bombings that followed Israel's 1996 assassination of the group's master bomb-maker, Yehiya Ayash.

And throughout the West Bank, young Palestinians protested the brothers' deaths by hurling stones at Israeli soldiers and shouting for revenge.

Israel clamped a closure on the West Bank and Gaza, preventing most Palestinians from crossing its borders, and ordered security forces on "heightened alert."

The latest tensions came as U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, who arrived in the region Wednesday, met with both sides to try again to hammer out a deal for an Israeli troop withdrawal from more of the West Bank in exchange for concrete steps by the Palestinians to crack down on Hamas and other extremists.

There were no reports of a breakthrough, and Ross' already herculean task appeared even more difficult in the wake of the killings. The Palestinian Authority joined Hamas, its frequent nemesis, in condemning the Awadallahs' killings, and a senior Palestinian official, Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, described Israel's action as "state terrorism."

But many questions remained unanswered after the shootings in this tranquil farm community west of the city of Hebron, including whether Palestinian security forces played a supporting role in helping Israel kill the men, who were wanted by both sides, and whether the Israeli army was initially unaware of who the brothers were, as senior officers claimed.

Israeli reporters said they were told by security sources that the men's identities were confirmed before the attack on the hilltop cottage at mid-afternoon Thursday.

Imad Awadallah, 26, had escaped last month from a Palestinian jail in Jericho, where he was being held on suspicion of killing another Hamas leader, Mohiedin Sharif, in March. Hamas blamed Israel for Sharif's death, but Palestinian officials said he was killed in a

power struggle within the militant group. Both Awadallah brothers were implicated in Sharif's death, but Adel became a fugitive and was never arrested.

Relatives of the Awadallahs said Friday that they believed the Palestinian police allowed Imad to escape in hopes he would lead them—or the Israelis—to Adel. Their mother, Nimeh, angrily blamed the men's deaths on Jibril Rajoub, who heads Palestinian security forces on the West Bank.

But their father, Ahmad Awadallah, said he was not surprised by their deaths. "They have asked for martyrdom since they took this road with Hamas," he said. "They did not expect to come out alive."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Imad Awadallah (left), and his brother Adel



Palestinian demonstrators burn American and Israeli flags on the top of a symbolic coffin with the words "Oslo accords" written on it 13 September, during a protest against continuing the peace process with Israelis. Some one hundred Palestinians held the protest on the fifth anniversary of the September 13, 1993 Oslo peace deal that was signed on the White House lawn with then Prime Minister Rabin, Yasser Arafat and US President Bill Clinton.

Afghanistan caught in tug of war

By Pamela Constable

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan—Afghanistan, once a bloody battlefield of the Cold War, is becoming deeply embroiled in a high-stakes rivalry between two regional powers—Iran and Pakistan—for influence over that fractious state at the crossroads of Central Asia.

Tensions in the region have been escalating rhetorically by the day—and could explode into military conflict—because of the killing of nine Iranian diplomats during intense civil

warfare in northern Afghanistan last month. Furious at Afghanistan's foot-dragging on the matter, Tehran staged a massive military exercise along the Afghan border last week and has since said it will send 200,000 troops there, warning that the threat of armed conflict is now "very huge and widespread."

But the diplomats' deaths are only one flash point in a much broader rivalry for ethnic and religious dominance, economic advantage, geographic access and interna-

tional influence that has split Afghanistan into Iranian and Pakistani spheres of influence. Until now, that influence has been largely covert and unacknowledged, but developments are fast causing knuckles to be bared on all sides.

"This marks a return to the regionalization of the Afghan conflict which we have not seen since 1979," when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, said Rifaat Hussain, a professor of international relations at the University of Islamabad. "I don't think Iran

will do anything rash, but the relationship between Iran and Pakistan has unraveled, and all of its contradictions are now coming into play."

Both Iran and Pakistan, which only months ago were working together to promote reconciliation among Afghans, have openly accused each other of providing military and intelligence support to various Afghan factions. Each has charged the other with engaging in a cynical bid for economic and political hegemony in the region, backing opposite sides in the struggle between the radical Taliban movement and its opponents to obtain control over strategic commercial routes and oil and gas pipelines into the neighboring former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

The Pakistani-backed Taliban has gained the upper hand in the past two years, seizing control of almost all of Afghanistan. The factions opposing the Taliban—a disparate alliance backed by Iran—have vowed to keep fighting, but they have been effectively defeated in all but three of Afghanistan's 32 provinces.

One of the Taliban's most significant battlefield victories—last weekend's capture of the town of Bamian, a key opposition stronghold—reflected not only the Taliban's increasing dominance over its opponents but also the heightened tension between the two sides' backers.

Taliban officials accused Iran of providing military support to the opposition forces. Tehran radio accused Pakistan of sending its air force to bomb the city in support of the Taliban's advance and said Iran was holding Pakistan responsible for what it termed war crimes at Bamian. Pakistan has denied that accusation and

previous allegations of direct involvement in the Afghan conflict.

Also fueling the volatile situation are ethnic and religious rivalries between the Taliban, who are Sunni Muslims of Afghanistan's dominant Pashtun ethnic group, and the opposition factions, many of which represent other ethnic groups or include Shiite Muslims.

Iran, a Shiite Muslim state, has a strong interest in promoting that sect. Pakistan, one of the Taliban's few international allies, is about 80 percent Sunni Muslim.

"There is no doubt that Pakistan has a deep strategic involvement in Afghanistan now. The Taliban are their Trojan horse," Hussain said. At the same time, he added: "There is now strong circumstantial evidence that Iran has been arming the Shites. These tensions are sectarian as well as economic."

The slayings of the Iranian diplomats, apparently at the hands of the Taliban, have raised the possibility that Iran might directly intervene in Afghanistan. In the past week, Tehran has issued a bewildering mix of restrained and belligerent statements, with some leaders vowing vengeance for the diplomats' killings and army officials saying they are prepared to give Afghanistan "a beating." Today Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, commander in chief of Iran's half-million-strong armed forces, put the military on high alert, according to the Reuters news agency.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has given no indication that its forces would become directly involved in such a conflict.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

...Stirs debate among Jews

By Rebecca Trounson

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—As new details emerge about Israel's killing of two Islamic militants, including information that they died in a targeted attack, many Israelis are asking whether such operations actually halt extremist violence.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and military officials have said they believe that the deaths last Thursday of Hamas activists Adel and Imad Awadallah dealt a crippling blow to the militant Islamic movement, which has killed scores of Israelis.

But several Israeli analysts and commentators said they fear the killings may produce only a short period of relative calm.

"There may be a period of time while the next wave of commanders for Hamas is equipped and trained," said Menachem Klein, an expert on Islamic extremism at Bar-Ilan University's Begin and Sadat Center. "I believe the motivation for retaliation will be very high, not only because the Awadallahs were killed, but because of the way they were killed. They were executed."

Danny Rubinstein, a respected journalist who has long covered Palestinian issues for the Haaretz newspaper, wrote in a column Monday that the movement's leadership is likely to view Israel's action as demanding "a response from Hamas in the form of an attempted terror attack. A lack of response will be interpreted as incompetence on the part of a movement that has been considerably weakened."

Other experts, however, argued that the chance to halt even a single attack gave Israel no choice but to carry out such an operation.

The Awadallah brothers were "very dangerous people," said Yigal Carmon, who served as anti-terrorism adviser to two Israeli prime ministers. "If we had left them alive, they could have carried out many more terror attacks against us."

A debate over the effectiveness of strikes against extremist organizations also emerged after the US attacks against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan in response to the bombings of US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Israel strongly supported the US action.

Adel Awadallah was considered a top leader of the underground military wing of Hamas, known as the Izzidin al-Qassem brigades; his brother was his chief assistant. They were killed in an operation carried out by the Israeli army and an elite border police squad at an isolated farmhouse in the hills west of Hebron.

The army said initially that it discovered only after the raid that the dead men were the Awadallahs. They were wanted in connection with several attacks in Israel, including last year's deadly bombing at a Tel Aviv cafe.

But Maj. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, who heads the Israeli army's central command, which includes the West Bank, later changed the official account. Yaalon said the owner of the house, a Hebron businessman, told the Israelis before they stormed the building that the occupants were indeed the fugitive brothers.

Although officials also said at first that the men were shot during a

confrontation with Israeli forces, Yaalon said the Awadallahs were taken by surprise and killed before they could fire back with the pistols and automatic weapons each was wearing. The general said he gave the order to launch the attack after the owner, who was arrested leaving the house, told the Israelis that the men had just eaten and were preparing to sleep.

"The order was to try to arrest them (but) in the end, we couldn't do that" without risking Israeli lives, Yaalon said in a briefing.

The Israeli army's response to the killings played a role in helping to track the men to their hideout.

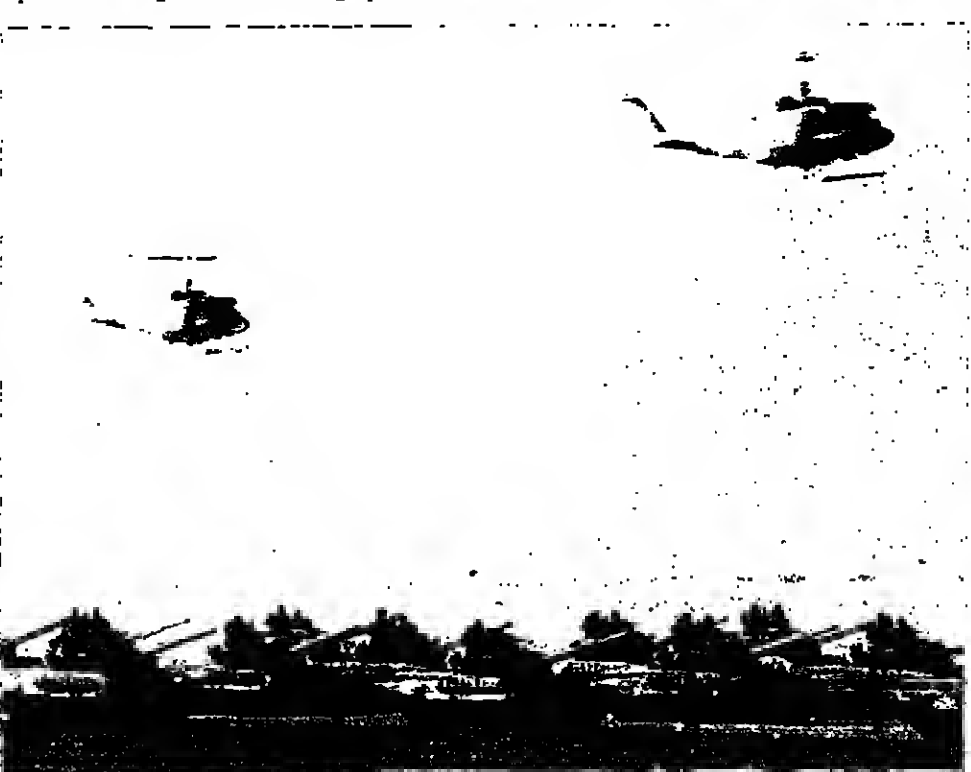
An army spokesman and other senior officials denied that the Palestinians assisted in the operation. Yaalon said he could not confirm or deny the reports.

The general said Israel and the Palestinians have "good cooperation" on many security issues, but added that it is better not to publicize it because of the risk that Palestinian commanders will be accused of collaborating with Israel.

If so, the timing of the killings could hardly have been worse. US envoy Dennis B. Ross is in the region to try again to persuade Israel and the Palestinians to reach agreement on an Israeli troop withdrawal from land in the occupied West Bank.

With the two sides now in agreement that the Israelis will withdraw from 13 percent more of the West Bank, the top issue is a memorandum outlining cooperation on security issues, including the battle against extremists. After the brothers' slayings, however, both Israeli and Palestinian officials are under internal pressure not to appear too eager to cooperate.

Reuters



Iranian helicopters fly over a column of tanks participating in the military manoeuvres held near the Afghanistan border September 2. Iran's Ground Forces Commander, Brigadier General Abdolali Pourshah, said September 12 in a news conference in Tehran. "Our policy is defensive. We do not intend to commit aggression against any country... but we are ready to answer any move by the Taliban with full power." Pourshah also said that Iran would hold another military exercise near Afghan border in late September.

Reuters



Bosnians walk on the new Mostar bridge—where the famous old stone bridge of Mostar once stood, before it was destroyed during Bosnia's civil war. Bosnians voted last weekend; the second general election since the end of the bloody 1992-95 war.

Reuters

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A special section offering
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global issues prepared for
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What's science got to do with it?

When navigating the new world order, many put superstition at the helm



Tools of the trade: superstitious beliefs and practices still have enormous influence in Latin America—and everywhere else on Earth

► The philosophers who sparked Europe's enlightenment in the 18th century were convinced that political freedom and universal access to information would put an end to the pervasive role of superstition in human affairs. If they were alive today, they might be having second thoughts. In a world where information has never traveled so freely and dependence on science is at an all-time high, superstition is flourishing in places as diverse as Moscow barbershops, the Ugandan bush and the Internet

By Alexander Pumpianski

IT RECENTLY DAWNED ON me that I don't go to the hairdresser's in order to have my hair cut. My visits there are actually a clumsy pretext for listening to conversations.

To achieve my real goal, however, means that I must forgo fashionable salons with exclusive services and acknowledged (at least in their own minds) coiffeur geniuses whose duty is to turn your head into a masterpiece. Success, for me, means finding the most basic barber's shop.

Why, you might ask, exchange hair for the right to eavesdrop? Because hairdressers, men and women alike, are ideal social mediums. While their hand perform habitual passes, their tongues sway loose. They chatter diligently and indefatigably, processing megabytes of the most diverse social information—about the next-door neighbor; about the President, Boris Yeltsin; about their shop manager and the intriguing details of offer in nearby stores; about adventures of cinema stars and catastrophes; about the chances it is going to rain or war is going to break out.

Completely unrestrained

As an old connoisseur of barber shop intelligence, I am aware of changes in the workings of that most democratic and free institution of public opinion. Over the past decade, starting with Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost*, it became completely unrestrained. It has also opened its doors to superstition of all stripes and shades. Consider two recent vignettes:

"Look here, girls; it's a wonder! Do you know that you should breathe through your right nostril on Sundays, Tuesdays and Saturdays, while on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays you should breathe through your left nostril. The Hindus have done it since times immemorial..."

"It was horrible! A Gypsy woman approached me in the street and offered me a real overcoat made from the fur of a monkey—fresh from Africa, she claimed. I was fully aware of fraud, but I couldn't resist myself. So I bought that synthetic trash, but yesterday the astrologer of the day explained everything in that TV program *The Third Eye*. Saturn was passing through the second House. This means for Pisces—this is my sign—that money leaks from the pocket like water."

After hearing the latter snippet, I abandoned my role as observer and commented that one should not always believe those astrologers. A choir of indignant voices attacked me for my skepticism. Ivan Petrovich's wife left him exactly at the moment when Saturn was in the fourth House in complete conformity with the forecast, I was informed.

I shut up under the shower of mystical expressions like "Radical Moon" and words than an experienced cryptologist would recognize as a corruption of the original Vedic. True, I still puzzle over what the woman who declared herself an Aquarius will do when Saturn will pass through the third House: apart from

money—which does not trouble me in the least—her horoscope promises a stream of slaves, camels, elephants and donkeys. How shall she manage them?

The new vogue for oriental calendars and horoscopes knows no social barriers. Although I have no personal experience of people making decisions based on horoscopes, explanations like the ones chronicled above can be heard even in the most sophisticated company. However, there are some peculiarities too. Success is always regarded as something deserved. Misfortunes are always blamed on the luminaries.

It is freedom that legalized superstition and fertilized its spectacular growth. Communism left no room for other superstitions for the simple reason that it tolerated no competitors.

Today, queer flowers of astrological advice and recommendations are blossoming in the press and TV. The realm of superstition is routine life, its examination and exposition everyday entertainment. In a post-communist world full of fortunes and misfortunes, new possibilities and old privations, its attraction is unlikely to wane in the near future. How else to chart a course through such an uncertain material world?

Still private

So far, superstition is a fact of private lives, not public policy. I remember only one political scandal in the post-communist era connected with superstition.

Three years ago, the newspaper *Moscow News* published an article about General Georgie Rogozin, the indispensable—but invisible—right hand man of Yeltsin advisor General Aleksandr Korzhakov. It turns out that Rogozin had a collection of hobbies—occult sciences and magic—that helped him carve a fantastic career, first in the KGB and then in Yeltsin's security service.

To climb the career ladder, Rogozin seduced his bosses with promises that a scientific breakthrough into the sphere of the unknown and the unexplained was imminent. He, of course, was the key to them knowing about—and exploiting—this breakthrough when it happened. He also played on their fears, saying that the Americans had the inside track because they had been exploring these phenomena but kept their research secret. And they believed him!

To the best of my knowledge, Rogozin made no breakthroughs. But the general's other dark and mysterious hobbies were made public, especially after Korzhakov's fall and the banishment of his team from the Kremlin. These involved surveillance and bugging, not only of the President's political opponents but his own colleagues as well, and control of illegal flows of "political money." Though superstition opened the door to these activities, they do yield to a rational explanation.

It is also possible there is a rational explanation for the gullibility of Rogozin's

► AT THE HELM NEXT PAGE

An army fighting in the name of God is directed by a (foreign) spirit council

Bullets puncture the faith of Ugandan rebels

By Ayebare Adonia

THE COMMITTEE guiding the fortunes of Uganda's main rebel group is unusual on two counts. First of all, its members—three Americans, two Sudanese, two Chinese and one Congolese—are all foreign. Secondly, they belong to another world. Fighters of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by former altar boy Joseph Kony, say they are in regular contact with at least eight named spirits as they wage war against the government of Yoweri Museveni.

Such is the importance of these spirits to the LRA's campaign that Kony devotes his time to communicating with them and interpreting their answers. When it comes to combat, Kony lets the LRA's commanders and young fighters face the well-equipped Ugandan army without him.

Behind the rebel lines, Kony, dressed in a white robe, sits on a table and puts one of his fingers in a glass of water to determine the number of casualties that can be expected. To determine the intensity of the fighting, he places dummies of guns and helicopters on a fire kindled with black charcoal and studies the way

they burn. This routine reportedly enables him to talk to the council of spirits and determine which strategies to take.

Superstition also plays a role in decisions made lower down the LRA's chain of command—its high command meets on selected sacred hills which have springs of water that flow even in the dry season.

For the young recruits who are not part of the inner circle that determines the interpretation of the spiritual world, this faith in superstition can be expensive. Many have been mowed down by machine guns they charged under the misguided belief that, thanks to the spirits, sneaking themselves with plant oils confers immunity from bullets. Some new LRA recruits are now deserting, saying that spirits do not work.

There is certainly evidence to support their doubts, both in the current casualties and the organization's history. Kony's predecessor, Alice Lakwena, was defeated by the Ugandan army when it punctured her claim that a concoction of herbs smeared on her troops made them bullet-proof. The LRA's main backers, the Sudanese government, has been urging Kony to substitute proper training in modern warfare for the spirit council's di-

rections—despite the fact the president of the spirit council is Sudanese.

Perhaps to compensate for the growing skepticism, the LRA has relaxed its ban on sex, smoking and drinking of alcohol. Members regularly abduct young girls whom they turn—forcibly—into wives. Previously, Kony had insisted that his fighters must abstain. He still demands that they revere and respect

trees, anthills, rivers and rocks—sites which are closely associated with the traditional deities of the local Acholi.

The LRA's leadership is also holding out the promise of a better, machine-gun-free future. Presently, LRA fighters are quietly collecting spears from the villages in anticipation of the coming "silent world." According to the spirit council, when this new era arrives all guns in the world will fall silent. Only those who know how to fight with stones, machetes

and spears will be victorious.

Unrealistic as these beliefs may seem to outsiders, they have a real resonance in Uganda. Superstition is commonplace in Uganda. Witch doctors advertise their services on commercial radio stations. Government officials and human rights activists are treating witchcraft and other forms of superstitions with kid gloves due to the fact that it is deeply ingrained in the day-to-day life of most Ugandans.

► PUNCTURED NEXT PAGE



Now all we need is plant oil: rebels fighting for the Lord's Resistance Army are often sent into battle against Ugandan government forces on the basis of superstitious rituals

05.1.11/24

Using information technology to connect with the stars

American astrologers enjoying a bull market for their services

By Alex Tiersky

THE STOCK MARKET'S recent dips and dives have many Americans wondering what the future holds. A good number of them are showing more faith in stars than shares, dialing their astrologers rather than their brokers.

And perhaps for good reason: it was recently reported in the *Los Angeles Times* that *Crawford Perspectives*, one of the nation's best-known astrological-based market timing reports, ranked sixth out of roughly 100 market timing newsletters based on the number of times it had accurately predicted the market's direction over an eight-year period. Using more traditional financial tools to supplement his astrological forecasts, the newsletter's author effectively outperformed most of his rivals.

This kind of success in the empirical world is less surprising than it might at first appear. Astrology in the US is undergoing a revolution, one fueled by information technology and personified by people like Joyce Levine.

Levine, a Boston-based astrological consultant, is entrepreneurial, business-minded, decidedly high-tech and well compensated for her services. One might easily mistake her for a corporate executive—even her job title has an executive ring to it.

With an international clientele of individuals and businesses, the value of Levine's time is definitely in the ascendant. An initial, two-hour consultation costs US\$200, which is standard for the emerging class of highly skilled and educated astrologers who have provided believers—an estimated 70 million in the US alone—with what they want: a reliable, quality product.

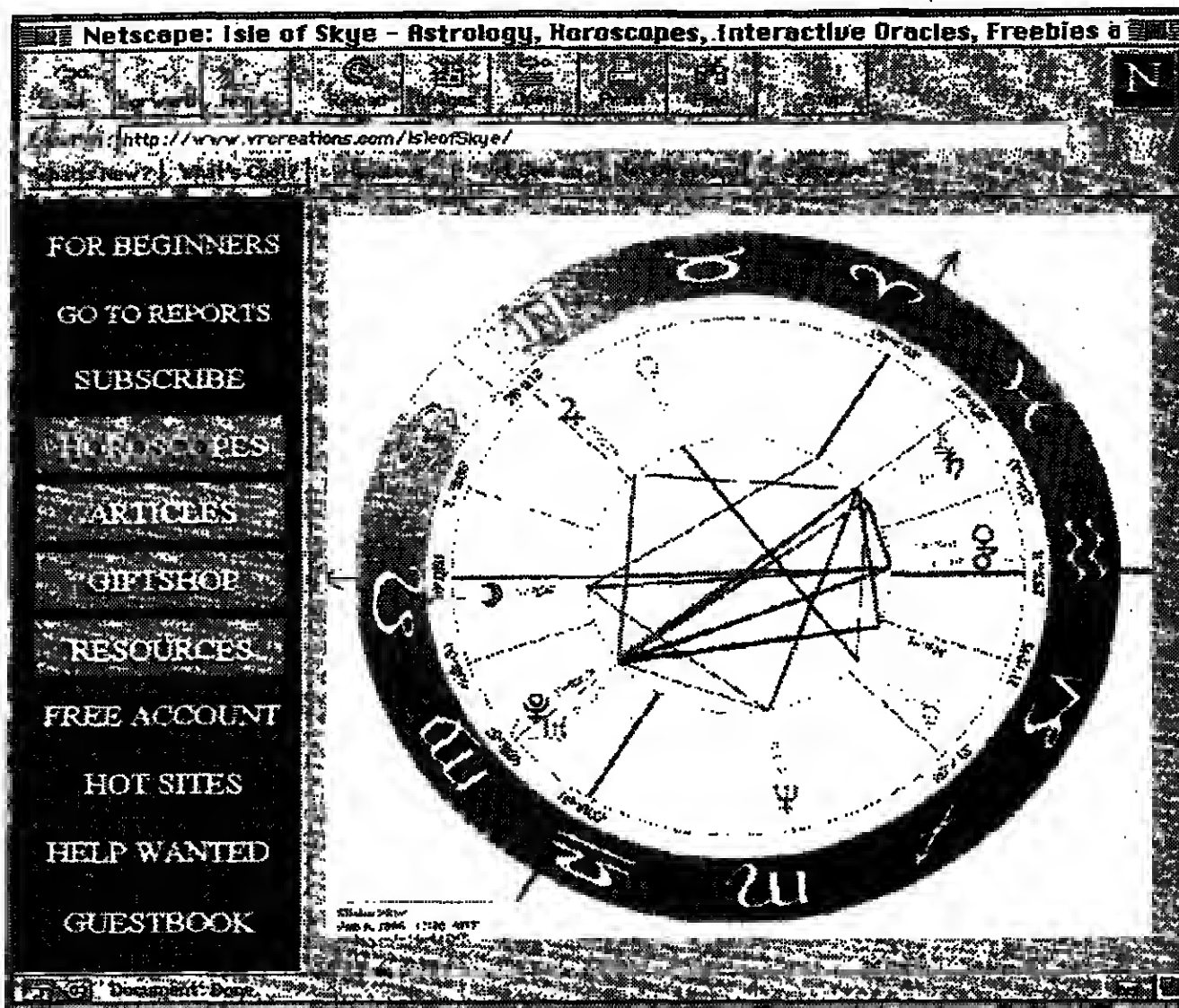
The catalyst for the recent professionalization of American astrology is the information technology revolution. The growing power of personal computers has meant great gains in the speed and accuracy of astrologists' predictions. What Levine calls the "serious" interpretations of the stars' effect on an person's life are based on the statistical analysis of individualized natal charts derived from the date, time and place of birth.

Until recently, this task was labor-intensive. But computers, aided by specialized software, have made the number-crunching almost instantaneous. They have also removed much of the human error.

"What used to take me several hours, I can now do in just a few minutes," says Joyce. Relieved of the need to grind out basic data, Levine can spend more time on interpretation.

Computers have opened other doors for American astrologers. Several successful astro-entrepreneurs have tapped the potentially huge market of Internet users. Sites like Eugene Diserio's *Astronet* website on America On-Line are wildly popular. The AOL-affiliated site serves, on average, 1.2 million visitors a day, while her smaller, independent site, *www.astronet.com*, is host to 1.5 million hits a month.

That kind of interest has allowed Diserio's online business to balloon, bringing in over \$1 million in less than three years. Her profits come from her on-line consultations services (consultations with Diserio's highest-rated on-



A wheel of fortune: a quarter of all Americans still rely on astrology to help them make important decisions

line astrologers can run to \$350) and advertisers who are attracted by the heavy traffic through the site.

Internet astrology offers advice-seekers an almost unlimited choice of rapidly available information and contacts while preserving the customer's anonymity. On the other hand, the unregulated nature of the Internet does mean that profit-seeking novices aren't constrained by any type of quality control.

This last issue is of great importance to those who consider themselves mainstream professionals. Levine, the chair of the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business Committee, feels that the shoddy work and inadequate expertise of novices distributing astrological advice by means of the Internet—or even newspaper columns—can have an adverse effect on her reputation and that of her colleagues, "the people who really know what they're doing."

The American Federation of Astrologers (AFA), the closest thing to an organizing body for the profession, told *The World Paper* that "there really is no way to ensure quality control, since there are no state or federal laws requiring licensing of astrologers. Anybody can read a book and go out there and start a business."

But the lack of any regulatory authority hasn't stopped the demand for astrologists' services from growing steadily. More and more, those seeking out the stars' interpreters are profit-seekers, businesspeople are looking for any "edge" they can get over their competition.

Perhaps the best-known service offered by such experts revolves around the inherent unpredictability of the stock market (unpredictable by conventional means, at least). But business astrology is not confined to stock market forecasting.

Because businesses also have a natal chart (based on the date and time of their incorporation, for example), their future can be read in the stars in much the same way as that of an individual.

According to Levine, she has counseled corporate chieftains on such matters as the most propitious day to incorporate, when to schedule a meeting with a competitor and when to launch a new product. Corporate lawyers, she says, seek her advice on what court date might be best for them—and, of course, worst for their opponents.

Of course, business astrology is still more the exception than the rule; Levine says that a good portion of her clients are individuals who are most interested in hearing about their personal life. These individuals' queries tend to center on the

classic triad of "health, wealth, and romance" that are the staples on the conventional newspaper horoscopes.

But whatever its uses, interest in astrology is defying skeptics. A recent poll published in the *Yankelovich Monitor Minute* indicated that the percentage of American adults who say they believe "somewhat" in astrology has risen from 17 percent to 37 percent since 1976. Roper polls have also indicated that one-quarter of Americans admit they use astrology to help them make decisions.

Perhaps the time has come to set up a mutual fund specializing in astrology shares. ☺

ALEX TIERSKY, A FORMER WORLD PAPER INTERN, WRITES ON SOCIAL ISSUES FROM BOSTON AND STRASBOURG.

But the Sumerians did it too...

The revelation that former US President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy regularly consulted the California astrologer Joan Quigley while in office came as a shock to mainstream America. However, if voters had read their history books or newspapers, they would not have been so shocked. Looking to the stars for advice is a leadership trait with deep historical roots—Sumerian kings, for instance, used astrologers to predict everything from crop yields to their political futures. Here are some of the more notable examples from recent times:

► Elizabeth Teissie, France's best-known astrologer, says that she was President Francois Mitterrand's astrological confidante for the seven years preceding his death and was indispensable to his decision-making.

Teissie claims that Mitterrand consulted her about the date on which to hold a referendum on the Maastricht treaty for the European Union, the trustworthiness of members of his cabinet and what days were best to address the nation. She also says she supplied him with information on his political opponents at home and abroad (including Iran's Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War).

► The Bangkok Post reports that astrology seems to be playing an increasingly important role in the political maneuvering of Thailand. According to the *Printhe Wanchai* paper, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, when he was first installed, decided to consult with the premier of Army commander. It was because a Thai astrologer told him that he would have a better future in politics.

► Many big bosses were recently contacted by the fortune teller to perform a five-hour "to do" list for the year. After the 1992 case, Chaitan Choudhary was asked to perform for the office of prime minister. "It's not my business," he replied.

► Captain Alexander Buzynov, of the Russian navy, self-proclaimed head of Moscow's military astrology program, recently launched a newspaper that focused on astrology. He was looking the trend of decline in the Russian navy's capabilities.

► Russian astrologers, Buzynov says, are now being used to predict the time and place of the next Russian military operations with great accuracy.

PUNCTURED

Continued from previous page

Under the country's penal code, the punishment for witchcraft is banishment of the perpetrator from his or her home and village. However, constitutional lawyers are challenging the law—which dates from the colonial days when any competition with Christianity was frowned upon—on the grounds it contravenes the new constitution's protections for freedom of worship.

Women are the usual suspects when it comes to the perpetrators of witchcraft, which is the major form of superstition, because of traditional African belief that they are specialists in herbs and other traditional medicine.

The strength of superstition's grip on Uganda can be gauged from the ease with which foreign spirits and practices are accepted. None of the LRA's spirit council are Ugandan, and Lakwena was said to be inspired by the spirit of a saintly Italian

army captain who drowned in the Nile during World War I.

Ironically, one of the foreign influences accepted by the superstitious Kony was the Italian missionaries who operated throughout northern Uganda when he was growing up there. Kony now claims he wants to replace Museveni's regime with one based on the Bible's Ten Commandments. ☺

ALEXANDER ADONIA IS A STAFF WRITER WITH *The East African*, A KAMPALA-BASED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER.

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AT THE HELM

Continued from previous page

superiors—lack of exposure to superstition. There was, of course, always room for prejudices and superstition in the Soviet Union, but their spread was hindered by two key factors: good, universal education and a bad, universal ideology.

On the ideological side, Marxism rejected religion, demystified history and mankind and declared itself the acme of rational thinking. This view was imposed by the succession of Soviet leaders with the entire force of their propaganda and the propaganda of their force. Its existence could not be questioned under the threat of the Gulag. Only sacrifices could and must be made in its name.

Ironically, as a practice Marxism

was, perhaps, the greatest superstition in the history of mankind—you only have to consider Lenin's mausoleum: the leader's holy relics exhibited for the veneration by atheists in the Red Square outside the Kremlin which have rested their during the entire 20th century!

Will the new superstitions be as damaging to Russia as the Soviet non-superstitions? Probably not. Superstition flourishes in two types of society: excessively poor and excessively rich. Russia does not belong to the latter type but, fortunately enough, the sheer poverty of communism lies in the past. ☺

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By Ghassan Joha
Special to The Star

NATURE HAS long been the central concern of mankind, but the historical development of agriculture and industry has greatly affected wildlife, and the worsening environment is now taking its toll on the Kingdom's birds.

Despite their endemic number, birds are greatly affected by pollution. Scientists and ornithologists have been warning that birds could very well become extinct in the near future, if this problem is not addressed. Birds are seen as an "excellent" indicator of environmental pollution, and in this respect, they are also a good indicator of the level of biodiversity in the natural habitat.

Jordan is one of many countries which has a relatively high level of biodiversity. According to Birdlife International (BI), the Kingdom's different environmental systems provide a natural breeding ground for more than 380 different bird species, due mainly to the country's varied topography, climate and biogeographical position.

The BI was founded in England in 1922 under its original name of the International Council for Bird Preservation, and operates through a global network of partners and wildlife-caring associates. Her Majesty Queen Noor is the honorary president of the BI programs in Jordan.

Despite the work of the BI, 10 bird species have become extinct in the Kingdom over the last 50 years. "The main reason for their extinction was the widespread industrial development, intensive chemical agriculture and the erosion of forests, which has destroyed natural habitats," said Adam Budeiri, director of the BI's Middle East office at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN).

He tells *The Star* that because of Jordan's position on the main migration routes between Africa, Asia and Europe, it supports the breed-

ing and staging of numerous bird species.

"Birds," says Mr Budeiri, "can live and reside in different habitat-types of woodland, bushland, grassland, agricultural, desert, wetland and marine. As such, bird habitats and migratory routes need a wide regional coordination to overcome the problems faced by biodiversity."

A widespread understanding amongst world governments to conserve the environment was shown by the 157 countries which signed the Biodiversity Convention at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The majority of bird species are concentrated in four globally important centers of endemism. These are south-east Arabia, Socotra, Mesopotamia and the Western Himalayas.

The actual number of the Kingdom's bird population is not yet available, but a total of 17 sites—covering an area of about 8500 square kilometres—were included in a special inventory published by BI in 1995. It identified all of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the Middle East.

The sites allocated in Jordan—technically known as IBAs—are all over the governorates, and cover 9.5 percent of the Kingdom.

Most of the birds were registered according to comparative data on their species, like the Raptors, which includes falcons, buzzards, vultures and waterbirds. They can all be classified as migratory birds.

The most common species in Jordan are the Dead Sea Sparrow (*Passer moabiticus*) and the Syrian Canary (*Serinus syriacus*). The former is a common resident around the Dead Sea, whilst the latter can be seen in winter around Umun Qais, and are known as a passage migrant birds.

The Brown Fish-Owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) is also a rare resident along the Yarmouk river

The birds of Jordan

An eco-system under threat



in the north. Budeiri said that, "all these birds are under threat of extinction." The Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*), in the north of the country, is also under threat because of its low popula-

tion rate.

"All of these birds search for clean, quiet and pollution-free habitats," Mr Budeiri says, who adds that, "the conservation of natural resources can be approached by protecting species from direct threats such as hunting, trading or harvesting. This can be made effective by legislation and active management." He adds, "Protection of sites by designating areas for the wider environments of birds and natural resources is the objective of BI and the RSCN."

The two-year BI study, which began in 1992, identified more than 390 IBAs in the Middle East. The object of the study was to make people more aware of the need to protect birds and their habitats, and to influence decision makers to adopt national strategies, and to give future priority to bird conservation.

In order to make people aware of the importance of biodiversity, Jordan named the Sinai Rosefinch (*Carpodacus synoicus*) as its national bird in 1995. It is most common in the south, around the Rum Valley and Petra in particular.

"Jordan has ratified many international conventions regarding bird conservation," adds Mr Budeiri. These include the Ramsar Convention for International Conservation of Wetlands and Habitats, the Convention of Migratory Species (known as the Bonn Convention), as well as the Biodiversity Convention.

Mr Budeiri states that many public institutions and centers cooperate with the BI and the RSCN in implementing the required regulations.

Most of the IBAs in the Kingdom are protected by law, and all the important bird habitats are covered, including natural and man-made wetlands. The majority of them are not under any immediate threat, except for the natural wetlands in Azraq and the Jordan Valley, which are subject to water abstraction and pollution problems.

Five bird reserves in the Kingdom were launched by the BI and RSCN. They are Al Azraq, Uman, Shoumari, Zubia and Moujeb. A sixth reserve in Aqaba is currently being developed.

The globally threatened Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) and Corncock (*Grus grus*) are now migrating in small numbers. The agricultural plains between Irbid and Madaba appear to be important feeding and resting areas for the Imperial Eagle, although they spend most of their time in the Rift Valley.

"Large birds benefit from the hot-air currents in the Rift Valley, as they can drift along and save energy for the further travel that awaits them," Mr Budeiri said.

There are many bird species, such as breeding raptors, sandgrouse and larks, that tend not to congregate in one particular location, preferring a scattered distribution.

The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Thrush Nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*) and White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) are staging or migrant birds, and are seen often in the urban and inhabited areas in the Kingdom. Meanwhile, chukars, quails and partridges (known as "Game Birds") are common during the winter months around the plains of the Jordan Valley.

To conserve these species, it is necessary to consider certain measures to protect their wider environments, e.g. agriculture, forestry and hunting regulations.

"Eco-tourism can play a major role in the fight to protect nature," stressed Mr Budeiri. He states that the BI is currently launching various projects to raise public awareness for biodiversity, and the importance of eco-tourism. "Jordan, however, is capable of developing its own eco-tourism projects," Mr Budeiri continues, "and most Jordanians regrettably misjudge the importance of the relationship between nature and tourism."

He urges everyone interested in biodiversity to visit one of the IBAs. "Taking suitable equipment (e.g. binoculars, notebook), and having a RSCN guide on hand, will greatly increase your enjoyment," Mr Budeiri comments.



Neem: The wonder tree

By Ehsan Nouri
Special to The Star

NEEM, a small tree with a bitter-tasting fruit, is known for its medicinal properties. It is a member of the Simarubaceae family and is native to the Indian subcontinent. The tree is known for its ability to grow in arid and semi-arid regions, and its fruit is used in traditional medicine to treat a variety of ailments.

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Cheng Cheng gives birth to twins

By Maggie Farley

CHENGDU, China—The babies were weeks overdue, and until hours before their birth, nobody even knew for sure if the mother was pregnant. But after days of nail-biting and pacing—by both Cheng Cheng the panda and her keepers—the gentle-looking bearlike creature gave birth last week to twins.

Giant pandas, one of the world's fastest-fading species, are also among the most mysterious. The black-and-white China natives are called "living fossils" because of the way their breeding patterns have failed to evolve. Their reproductive habits, including a unique "free-floating" egg that keeps scientists guessing, still perplex experts armed with the most modern technology.

Only about 1,000 pandas are left in the world—Cheng Cheng's offspring increased the global panda population by 0.2 percent—and as their natural habitat in China's high-altitude bamboo forests shrinks, so do their chances of perpetuating the species.

"Left to their own devices, extinction of the panda is inevitable," says scientist Wang Pengyan, the deputy director of the Wolong Panda Preserve in western China. "Our job is to extend the time that pandas will be in the world."

This means everything from artificial insemination and test-tube babies created from the eggs of a dead panda to a new, ambitious attempt to clone pandas. Such efforts are exacerbating conflicts between environmentalists and scientists—and have launched a race between cloning specialists East and West.

Critics say that genetic manipulation should be a last resort. But in the meantime, pandas need to work on their chemistry. Not only is the female extremely picky about her mate, she only goes into heat once a year, and then only for about 72 hours. To make matters worse, males, especially the ones in captivity, are not known for their sexual prowess. Not only are their sexual organs undeveloped—about thumb-sized—but they are not always sure how to use them.

"He may think he knows what he's doing, but he can't really tell," says Zhang Guizhan, the assistant director of the Wolong preserve, in Sichuan province. "He may try her ear, or wherever, until he finally figures it out or she gets irritated and walks away."

Faced with the pandas' lack of ardor, Chen Dayuan, a professor at the Institute of Zoology of the Chinese Academy of Science, is taking their survival into his own hands. Inspired by Dolly, the sheep cloned in 1996 at the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, Scotland, and the recent successful cloning of a cow in New Zealand and mice in Hawaii, the embryologist hopes to use the method to save the endangered species.

A patch of skin taken from the belly of a panda during an unrelated operation will provide the cells for cloning. But because of objections to using the rare pandas as experimental animals, Chen is attempting a trans-species cloning: implanting a panda embryo into a surrogate mother of another species, such as a black bear. Dolly the sheep and the other successful clones were implanted in the same species.

"Trans-species cloning has never been done before," Chen says from his laboratory in Beijing. "It's very difficult to say whether it will work."

But even if the Beijing scientists do succeed, the results could do more harm than good, critics warn. "Making replicas of existing animals may expand the number of pandas but will limit the gene pool and disrupt natural selection,"

concedes Li Guanghua, the director of a panda breeding center in Chengdu who cautiously supports cloning. Chen, the Beijing professor, argues that the scientists will clone an assortment of pandas to breed with wild ones, which will give more of them a chance to mate.

The Chinese Academy of Sciences, which has banned human gene cloning and warned of the environmental dangers of cloning animals and plants, has dropped its ethical objections when it comes to pandas. While the experiments haven't sparked a philosophical discussion about man taking over the role of natural creation, it has generated a debate between naturalists and scientists.

"Cloning pandas is just a publicity stunt," says wildlife biologist William Bleisch, who advised the Sichuan Forest Ministry on how to conserve the pandas' natural habitat. "It distracts from the real work to be done, which is preserving their environment."

At the Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding where Cheng Cheng gave birth to her twins (Shi Shi and Dian Dian), scientists are doing what they can to help perpetuate pandas. Together with the Wolong Panda Preserve, they have had the most success in breeding pandas in captivity but have yet to release any into the wild, because the

bamboo forests are quickly disappearing.

Sichuan's forests have shrunk by a third, and the lack of trees to absorb rainfall and reduce erosion has turned yearly floods into annual catastrophes. But the disastrous effects of flooding on the Yangtze River this summer brought good news for pandas: a ban on logging in Sichuan province where the pandas live. "This, more than anything, more than cloning, will help the survival of the pandas," says Chengdu director Li.

But until the forest regrows and pandas can once again thrive in the wild, scientists are hedging their bets. A team at the Chengdu center recently plucked eggs from the ovaries of a freshly dead female and artificially fertilized them.

"This means we have another source of eggs," says the lead scientist, Zhang Meijia. "Even though the female was not breeding age, not in season, and, uh, not alive, the eggs were still viable."

Despite all the technological advances, scientists are still in the dark once the panda mate or a female is inseminated. "It's nearly impossible to tell if they're actually pregnant," says San Diego Zoo public relations officer Barbara Ayers, who was on a research exchange at Wolong. San Diego is conducting a similar birth

watch with a female panda who is at least several weeks, maybe months, overdue. "Even with ultrasound, the fetus is so small it's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

One of the reasons it's so difficult to confirm pregnancy is because after the egg is fertilized, whether naturally or artificially, it can float around the uterus for up to three months before embedding in the lining and starting to grow. That makes estimating a due date difficult: unlike humans and other animals, even detectable hormonal levels don't offer a clue.

The ambiguity bothers the scientists more than the pandas, of course. But because newborn pandas are so tiny—about the size of the palm of a hand—the doctors want to witness the birth to keep the babies from being accidentally squashed by their lumbering mothers. Twins are common—more than half of births—but the survival of both cubs is not.

Mother pandas must clutch the tiny babies to their breast to nurse, and many find it too difficult to hold both cubs and feed themselves as well. Minutes after a recent birth in the Wolong Nature Preserve, keepers scooped a mewling twin out of the way with a long-handled net just before the mother would have stepped on it.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



The happy mother

AROUND TOWN



Children and Coca-Cola

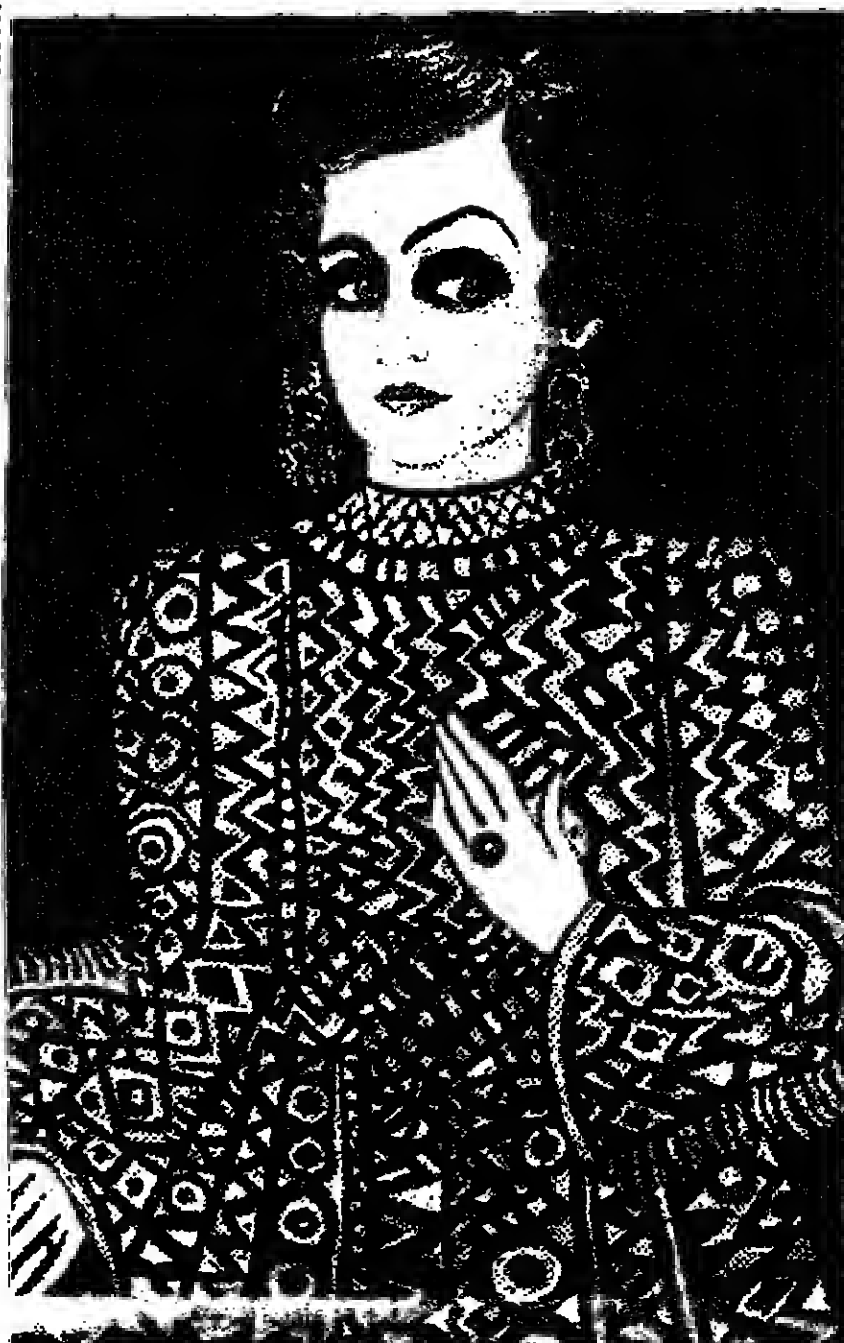
THE COCA-COLA plant in Madaba recently welcomed 60 children from Dar Al Bir orphanage to participate in the coca-cola plant visit program.

The children, ages between 5 and 10, were accompanied by chaperones and 'mothers', and taken on an educational and fun tour of the plant's facilities.

Senior tour guide, Ruba Nu'man, gave an extensive presentation on the different, hightech methods used in creating the world's most popular soft drink.

Mother Fadwa Aweidah, activities coordinator for Dar Al Bir, said, "On behalf of Dar Al Bir and all the children here, I extend my warmest thanks to Coca-Cola for inviting us..."

New gallery enthuses art among the people



A painting of Princess Fakhr Al Nisa

By Lubna Khader
Star Staff Writer

MORE THAN 120 works of Jordanian and Arab artists are currently on display at the Fakhr Al Nisa Zeid Gallery; these are plastic and geometric abstractions. The new Gallery was opened this year to strengthen the relations between the arts and the people.

The idea of its establishment came from the Ministry of Culture; it attempts to increase greater appreciation of the arts. The ministry wishes to hold Jordanian and Arab exhibitions for those interested in understanding plastic art because it believes that more can be done in supporting the arts in Jordan.

Because of this, it decided to hold this permanent exhibition to promote this kind of art. The galleries space covers an area of 200 square meters.

The gallery, which is inside the premises of the ministry, is named after Princess Fakhr Al Nisa who is considered the founder of the Jordanian plastic art. Princess Fakhr studied art in Dar Al Funon in Istanbul, later organizing many exhibitions in America and Europe.

The other purpose of establishing this permanent exhibition is to hold cultural and artistic lectures, and to provide a new cultural venue for the Jordanian public.

Visitors to the exhibition immediately notice that most of the works on display belong to Jordanian artists. However, a special section is devoted to other Arab artists.

Works on display from this country date back to the early 1960s. One of these is titled "Faces," painted by Mohammed Al Ameri. He told *The Star* that every face expresses a different point of view; his deep emotions and the interaction inside him.

Another painting of an Arab artist, Shaddad Al Qahaar from Iraq, also attracts attention. It is a painting of legs that is essentially about people going to different places.

Rafiq Al Razaz, an Egyptian artist, painted a woman in a geometrical form. At first glance, the onlooker would be hard pressed to recognize that it is a representation of a woman.



Hussein Da'seh



Dr Ibrahim Abu Rub



Nazieh Owies

And there are sculptures by Mahmud Taha who is one of the Jordanian pioneers in the field of geometric art. One of his sculptures represents a warrior holding a sword and a shell. Other sculptures by Ibrahim Arar are of olive wood.

The ministry will organize cultural seminars to promote cultural awareness among the Jordanian people, and continue on the same path which was started by Princess Fakhr Al Nisa Zeid. ■



Khalid Khrais



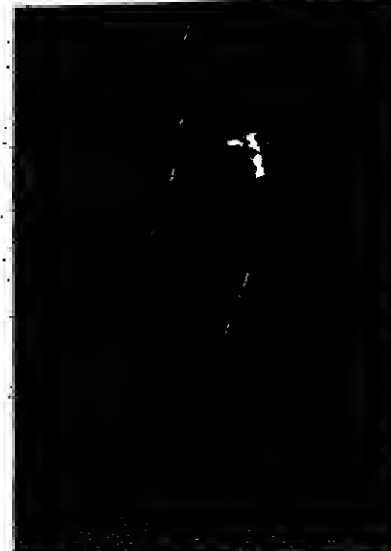
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Art from Amman, art about Amman!

This painting is one of the many works by artist Sabah Al Hadidi. It is about Amman, and is one of a collection about the capital that the artist painted in the early '90s. What is distinctive about this piece is the style of the painting. The Syrian-born artist decided to use the elevation technique which is one of the many methods employed by today's art schools. The painting is supposed to be a true representation of Amman. Its rich architectural heritage of rows upon rows of elevated housing portrays a dynamic bustling city that is about different residential areas and of different ethnic groups that is seen through mosques and churches existing together in harmony. Al Hadidi is leaving Jordan, which was his home for the last 10 years, and is going back to Syria soon.

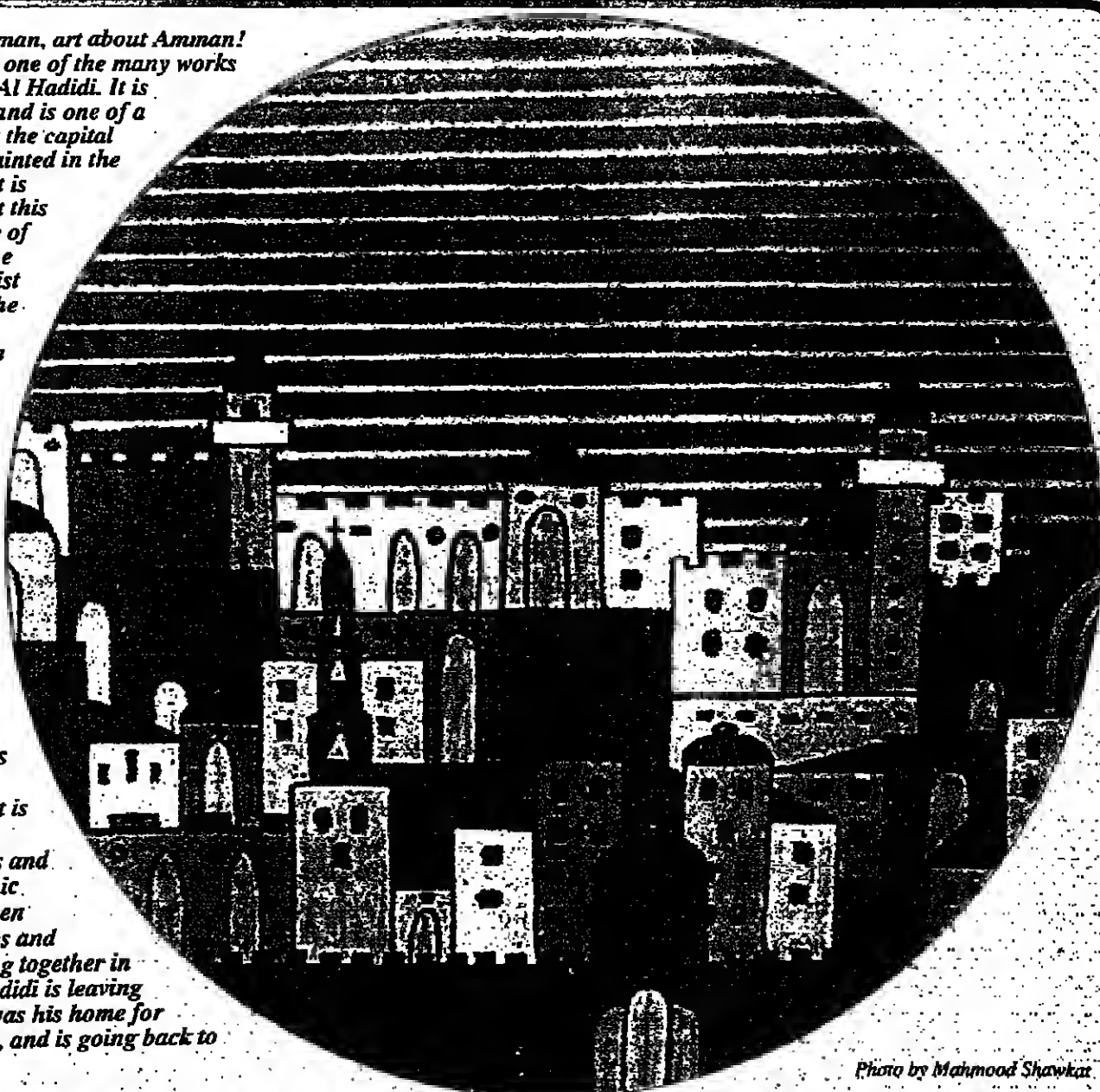


Photo by Mahmood Shawkat

AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ Paintings by 18 artists from Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon at the Al Mashriq Gallery, Shimsani. It continues until 1 November.

■ An art exhibition by Rula Shukairy at the French Cultural Center started on 1 September. The exhibit deals with the phenomenon of light as one of the most important issues of life. The event ends on 30 September.

■ Genevieve Hofman made a survey for French artists and their sites in Paris, as the 20th century goes by. Starting on 9 September, her exhibition of 69 photographs and artworks will be shown at the Jordan's Plastic Artists' Association in Jebel Weidh. It runs until 30 September.

■ The Solidarity exhibition by Palestinian artist Makbul and Indian painter Alnoor Mitha continues at the National Gallery of Fine Arts till 3 October.

■ A joint exhibition for Arab artists continues at the Hamorabi Gallery till 15 October.

■ The Summer '98 exhibition continues at Darat

Al Funun. This is an annual exhibition of arts and graphics from different Arab artists. Besides the art exhibit, there are many art lectures almost everyday.

■ There is an exhibition of wrought iron furniture by Jordanian artist Saleem Bandak at Al Baydar Hall in Kan Zaman village. It continues till 17 September.

Films

■ Water World, a science fiction movie starring Kevin Costner and Denis Hoffer, is showing at the American Center, today, 17 September at 5 pm.

Seminars

■ 'American Politics and the Middle East' is a lecture that is being presented by Judith Kipper at the American Center on 22 September. Ms Kipper is the Co-Director of the Middle East Studies Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

■ Also at the American Center on 23 September, is a lecture titled 'New Media, New Literacies: Language teaching in the age of information' is presented by Dr Mark Warschauer, who is coming from USAID Cairo especially to give this lecture at 6 pm.

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Le «casino du diable» s'est ouvert à Jéricho

● Cette semaine, quelques centaines d'Israéliens sont venus profiter du premier casino palestinien à Jéricho en Cisjordanie. L'Oasis Resort, géré par un groupe autrichien, est destiné principalement aux Juifs. Le jeu est interdit par la religion musulmane. De plus, il n'existe aucun casino en Israël. Le Hamas a protesté contre «l'humiliation, la déchéance et le stupre» qu'est ce «casino du diable». Cependant, quelques Palestiniens de Jéricho, Jérusalem et du reste de la Cisjordanie étaient conviés à l'inauguration, malgré leur devoir d'abstinence. Respectant des mesures de sécurité impressionnantes, 800 personnes ont commencé à affluer à 20 heures jusqu'à 6 heures, profitant des 230 machines à sous et 32 tables de jeu de roulette, de Black Jack et de poker. Le casino doit s'insérer dans un complexe touristique, le plus important des territoires palestiniens, qui doit comprendre d'ici deux ans trois hôtels, une salle de conférence, un parcours de golf et des courts de tennis. Le tout sur un terrain de 5 km². La compagnie des services commerciaux de l'Autorité palestinienne détient 30% du capital et, dans 15 ans, elle sera propriétaire du complexe hôtelier, selon un haut responsable palestinien.



Un Israélien partage la table de Black Jack avec des Arabes. Des centaines de personnes sont venues tenter leur chance pour l'ouverture d'Oasis Resort.

Éclaboussures

Démocratie pas à pas

Lorsque la nouvelle loi sur les publications est entrée en vigueur au début de ce mois, on s'attendait à la résignation générale des Jordaniens. Surtout après tous les efforts déployés pour éviter son adoption par le Parlement, en vain. Et bien non ! Contrairement aux coutumes habituelles, dès le lendemain de sa publication dans le Journal officiel, des voix parlementaires et autres, se sont élevées pour dire «la nécessité d'amender une loi anticonstitutionnelle».

Les députés Nazih Ammarine et Khalil Attiyeb se disent prêts à demander avec d'autres la révision. De même, selon le président de l'Association des journalistes, le texte est inadmissible pour sa profession qui entend poursuivre la lutte par des «moyens démocratiques». Dans un mémorandum adressé la semaine dernière à la commission des libertés publiques de la Chambre des députés, l'association jordanienne des droits de l'homme réclamait l'amendement de la loi «afin de la rendre conforme avec la Constitution et les principes de justice et de garantir réellement la liberté d'expression».

J'ai longuement réfléchi à cette évolution positive des esprits, à ce sur-saut contestataire, et j'y ai trouvé la démocratisation du pays. Ce processus permet en effet de s'opposer en toute légalité : qu'une politique, une décision, une loi, une mesure s'attaquent aux droits et aux intérêts des citoyens et le courage est plus grand pour mener le combat, même si l'on doit se heurter à un mur d'incompréhension.

Reconnaissons au moins un mérite à l'ancien gouvernement Majali : celui d'avoir suscité, de force de provocations, des résistances. Ainsi, lorsque le gouvernement voulait s'emparer, l'an dernier, des caisses d'épargne des associations professionnelles, il a dû rapidement faire machine arrière devant le tollé général.

Cette mutation n'est pas unilatérale. Le pouvoir exécutif également a évolué et semble avoir compris le sens de la conciliation. Le Prince Hassan n'a-t-il pas annoncé la création d'une «Haute autorité de la presse», comme pour montrer sa volonté de circonscrire les méfaits inhérents à la loi sur les publications ? Le ministre de l'Information n'a-t-il pas multiplié les déclarations apaisantes ? Enfin, Bilal Al-Tal, le directeur du Département de la Presse et des Publications bonifié par la presse n'a-t-il pas été remplacé par un homme plus «démocratique» en la personne d'Iyad Qattan ? Bref, tout a été mis en œuvre pour rassurer les journalistes et leur promettre une application moins draconienne que prévue de la nouvelle législation.

Conclusion : «La démocratie à la Jordannienne» retiendrait donc les leçons de ses faux pas. Reste à éloigner définitivement les mauvais démons, en votant les amendements nécessaires à cette loi toujours menaçante. Comme le disent les journalistes : «Aujourd'hui, notre ministre de l'Information est gentil mais demain ?».

Suleiman Sweiss

Le Jourdain
Supplément
du Star
5664153



Il faut dix mois pour que le tilapia atteigne l'âge adulte et soit prêt à la consommation. Sa chair blanche est très tendre.



Nous sommes à 7 kilomètres de la Mer Morte et infertile au sud du village de Kafraïn : c'est la partie la plus hostile de la Vallée du Jourdain. Les champs de bananes et d'arbres ont depuis un bon kilomètre laissé la place à des terrains rocailleux et salés. Il n'y a que deux choses pour rassurer le visiteur : d'une part les pylônes électriques qui relient spécialement la ferme de la Jordan Valley Fisheries (JVF) et servent accessoirement de guides ; d'autre part, le panneau «Maghtas» (baptême en arabe) qui indique la direction du site archéologique, où Jésus aurait été baptisé (voir article page 13). Si le Christ est passé par là, qu'avons-nous à craindre ?

Au détour d'un virage enfin, la ferme avec un grand bâtiment blanc et une serre vert pastel, au toit en dents de scie comme les usines métallurgiques du nord de la France. Pas un souffle d'air, pas un bruit, l'exploitation semble assoupie sous la chaleur encore écrasante de ce mois de septembre.

«Tilapia au plus scientifique» Oreochromis Niloticus. Cette précision sonne presque comme une bizarrerie dans la bouche de Rick Engel, casquette et grosses lunettes noires de routier californien, plutôt que professeur Tournesol. Il ne faut jamais se fier aux apparences. Le tilapia est un poisson que Rick connaît bien pour l'avoir longuement fréquenté en Californie dans une ferme aquicole du même type. C'était dans l'est de Los Angeles, à Suo City, dans une zone tout aussi chaude et ensoleillée que la Vallée du Jourdain. Depuis l'Ouest Américain, Rick Engel est donc venu en Jordanie pour apporter son savoir-faire à une équipe de d'investisseurs jordaniens suffisamment culotés pour croire à l'idée d'un élevage de poissons en plein désert. Bine entendu, le tilapia a été choisi.

Pas de tocards

Aujourd'hui, ce poisson qui évolue dans les eaux chaudes des lacs d'Afrique et du Delta du Nil, se reproduit par milliers dans les bassins de la JVF. Il est vrai qu'on y est aux petits soins pour lui. Son eau, saumâtre et de toute façon inutilisable pour les cultures, est tirée d'un puits voisin. Elle contient une proportion de sel adéquate pour son développement maximum et dans le même but, est maintenue en

Pisciculture

Comme un poisson dans le désert

La Vallée du Jourdain : difficile d'imaginer pire endroit pour élever des poissons. Et pourtant ça marche. Désormais ils sont des centaines de milliers à barboter sous un climat d'enfer.



Des roues à palettes assurent automatiquement la circulation et l'aération continues de l'eau des bassins où évoluent les poissons.

permanence au-dessus de 25-26 degrés. La plupart du temps c'est facile. Dans cette région où les nuages ne montrent vraiment le bout de leur nez que trois ou quatre jours par an, le soleil est dominant. L'effet de serre, sous laquelle sont disposés les bassins, joue pleinement son rôle et l'eau se réchauffe naturellement. Cependant, il arrive certains soirs d'hiver que la température baisse dangereusement. La ferme met alors en route trois énormes chaudières pour éviter que les poissons perdent leur rythme de croissance. Au total, l'exploitation consomme 300 litres d'eau par kilo de poisson produit, ce qui selon notre américain, incommensurable sur les chiffres, «représente peu de choses par rapport à d'autres types de piscicultures».

Enfin, les tilapias sont régulièrement nourris de graines

riches en protéines. Ainsi bien choisis, ils arrivent à maturité dans l'assiette du consommateur après dix mois de sinécure. Leur histoire a commencé avec des «reproducteurs» importés d'Égypte et qui donnent naissance à plus de 200.000 larves par mois. Seuls seront gardés les mâles viables pour l'élevage : pas de tocards chez JVF. C'est une sélection : mais, à l'arrivée, ils sont tout de même 100.000 par mois, à barboter dans les grands bassins, sous l'œil vigilant de la ferme.

fréquence d'avance sur les autres piscicultures de l'élevage. Reste un obstacle de taille : changer les habitudes de consommation. Pour l'instant, ni effet, le poisson se vend à peine plus cher que le poisson d'importation. Les importations d'élevage sont donc limitées. Les poissons de l'élevage ont-ils le goût différent ? Rick Engel ne peut pas répondre. Mais, il est sûr que le tilapia, espèce en voie d'expansion dans la Vallée du Jourdain.

Yannick Lainé

Le Moyen-Orient dans la presse française

Y-a-t-il un président pour sauver la paix ?



Le chef de l'État le plus puissant du monde tremble. En plus de son humiliation publique, du désaveu de certains proches, le pire pourrait encore se produire : la procédure de destitution. Dans l'hypothèse d'une démission, de nombreuses questions se posent concernant les répercussions économiques mondiales de cette affaire privée, sans oublier son impact sur le processus de paix toujours en panne.

«Comme un grand vide à la tête du monde. La Maison Blanche, obscurcie par le Monoculture, a délaissé la diplomatie», titre Libération dans son édition du 15 septembre. «Ce n'est pas sérieux. Pourtant, l'inquiétude est réelle dans le monde de voir la seule superpuissance à la dérive, alors que son Capitaine a lâché la barre pour tenter d'éteindre les incendies qui ont éclaté dans sa cabine», écrit l'analyste Patrick Sabatier, en ajoutant que «la puissance et l'influence des États-Unis ne peuvent pas être isolées de la crédibilité personnelle du chef de l'État. Il ne s'agit pas que de morale personnelle. C'est la Maison Blanche qui définit les grands axes de la politique étrangère américaine : bien plus que le Cabinet». Plus précisément, le journaliste évoque des «risques amplifiés, parce que des crises endémiques sont en train de se précipiter. Avant même que le rapport Starr vienne la déstabiliser, la politique étrangère était dans l'impasse sur des sujets aussi sensibles que le Proche-Orient ou l'Irak».

Trafic de voitures

Libération a également publié au début de cette semaine un article sur le «désespoir palestinien, cinq ans après Oslo». L'envoyé spécial du quotidien à Jérusalem évoque d'abord l'affaire Fadoua, une jeune femme enceinte qui, bloquée par un barrage israélien n'a pu arriver à temps à l'hôpital pour sauver son enfant. Il constate ensuite que «l'Autorité palestinienne semble à la fois laïque et impuissante» et se demande «ce qu'il reste du processus de paix qu'une poignée de main avait entériné. Il y a tout juste cinq ans». Il ajoute même que «dans les campagnes de Cisjordanie, les barrages militaires et les routes réservées aux colons sont les résultats les plus tangibles. Les Palestiniens des villes, enfermés dans leurs enclaves autonomes, ne craignent plus les raids d'une armée qui n'est pas la leur. Ils jouissent de pouvoirs qui caractérisent davantage une municipalité qu'un État. Taisant ainsi perdu en liberté de



Le couple présidentiel américain au cœur de l'actualité et de la tourmente Lewinsky. Du coup, le cinquantième anniversaire des accords d'Oslo est passé complètement inaperçu.

mouvement ce qu'ils ont gagné en sécurité».

Dans son édition hebdomadaire du 5 septembre, le Point souligne pour sa part un «juteux trafic en Palestine». «Tout ne va pas si mal en Israël et en Palestine, commente le journaliste Mehdi Benchelani, un trafic de voitures à grande échelle s'est mis en place entre Israël et les territoires autonomes. Assurés de ne pas être poursuivis par la police israélienne, nombre de Palestiniens habitant la bande de Gaza achètent des véhicules récupérés de l'autre côté de la ligne verte. Si certains sont volés puis transférés à Gaza par des réseaux liés à la mafia, d'autres sont vendus aux Palestiniens par leurs propriétaires. Ces derniers, dans une version locale du dicton «d'une pierre deux coups», s'empressent de déclarer le vol de leur véhicule, afin de se faire rembourser par leur assurance».

Nahed Al-Khlouf

Art

Cités d'artistes au centre du Cercle

Le Cercle des artistes plasticiens accueille, pour la première fois, une manifestation organisée par le Centre culturel français. D'une pierre deux coups : découverte d'un lieu et d'une expo.

Situé dans un quartier traditionnel de Djebel-Lweibdeh, le Cercle des plasticiens est un endroit de prédilection pour les artistes qui ont choisi de représenter la culture jordanienne. Pourtant, cette association créée à la fin des années 1970 met en évidence les faiblesses de l'État dans ce domaine : le développement artistique ne semble pas à l'ordre du jour. «Les profits de l'art plasticien sont quasiment nuls», commente l'artiste Mohd Abu Afife. «Le regard que pose sur nous la société jordanienne est très négatif. Pourtant, notre choix de vivre de notre art est respectable. Nous sommes observés comme des créateurs mystérieux et inconnus. Nous en subissons les conséquences dans notre vie de tous les jours».

Réaliste et imaginaire, l'art plasticien est également créatif et innovant. La technique est libre : acrylique, graphisme, peinture à l'eau ou encre de Chine sont des supports permettant à chacun de s'exprimer librement, en faisant passer ses émotions spontanées. Le résultat est une très grande diversité dans les œuvres, que certaines mauvaises langues qualifient d'«amateurs».

3000 JD par an

Fort de ses 250 artistes exposant régulièrement leurs travaux, le Cercle ne bénéficie pas en tout cas d'une aide financière adaptée. C'est en tout cas l'avis de Ghassan Mafaddeh, artiste et administrateur : «Nous ne recevons du gouvernement que 3000 dinars par an, et quand on sait que le loyer nous coûte 2500...». Puis levant les yeux au ciel, ce sosie de Che Guevara déclare : «Contrairement aux pays développés, l'art n'est pas du tout une priorité ici. Cela commence à l'école, en particulier chez les arabes. Il n'existe au-

cune pédagogie artistique, ce qui rend le niveau général très faible».

Pour sortir de son isolement, le Cercle tente de nouer des relations avec les instituts étrangers. C'est le cas actuellement avec le Centre culturel français (CCF) qui présente le travail photographique de Geneviève Hoffman sur «Les Cités d'artistes à Paris».

Sur la plaquette, une photo nous plonge dans l'univers de l'exposition. Une rue étroite jonchée de vieux objets. Des enfants qui débamboulent au milieu de ce couloir crasseux. De chaque côté, des portes ouvertes pleines de souvenirs. Il s'agit en fait d'ateliers d'artistes ou de salubres banques, dans des quartiers oubliés du Paris ancien.

Le nombre de 69 photographies, réparties sur un plan dant du XIX^e siècle, illustre cette grande richesse créative dans le plus grand dénuement matériel. Souvent insolite, on peut cependant reprocher à cette exposition l'absence de vie, de visages humains : les artistes manquent à l'appel des clichés. De plus, les photos semblent éviter le revers de la médaille. La Mairie de Paris, qui sponsorise, ici, l'exposition, est en guerre ouverte contre tous ces squats et ces bâtiments consacrés à l'art. «Sans prétexte de salubrité publique, elle menace régulièrement les artistes d'expulsion», souligne un Parisien, de passage à Amman, qui connaît bien la situation tangente de ces cités. Il faut croire que Geneviève Hoffman a pris le parti des lieux plutôt que celui des habitants qui les font vivre. Dommage.

S. A.



Une des trop rares photos de l'exposition avec de la vie. Car les cités d'artistes de Paris, c'est aussi cela et pas seulement des lieux de création.

Cités d'artistes à Paris, une expo-photo par Geneviève Hoffman au Cercle des artistes plasticiens jordaniens, jusqu'au 30 septembre.

Si T P A R A C A N B L A L D N E

Le mot de la semaine

«ETAT»

Parler de «stabilité d'un État» est étonnamment pléonastique. Un œil averti reconnaîtra en effet dans ces deux termes la racine commune «sta», plus perceptible dans l'ancien français *estat* d'où est issu *état*. Sémantiquement aussi, l'ancien français *estat* le lien entre l'état et la grande famille formée par cette racine, *estat* signifiant au XIII^e siècle, la manière d'être, de se tenir, la station, le statut.

La racine «sta» qui a pour sens de base se tenir debout est largement attestée dans toutes les langues indo-européennes. On observe des correspondances régulières dans les langues anciennes : le *sanākrīt* «sta-», le grec *he-stai-n*, le latin *sta-d* signifiaient tous «se tenir debout». Dans les langues modernes, l'allemand pose *stehen*, se dresser, en face de l'anglais *to stay*, rester. En français, des mots aussi divers que constitution,

statue, étage, découlent de cette racine par l'intermédiaire du latin. On la retrouve en iranien et en afghan, dans *ostan*, pays, qui figure dans les noms de pays terminés par «-stan». Kurdistan, le pays des Kurdes, Afghanistan, le pays d'Afghan, nom probable d'un ancêtre héroïque. Pakistan est, quant à lui, de formation récente. Il signifie soit pays du Penjab-Afghanistan-Kashmir, la première partie du nom représentant les initiales de ces trois régions, soit le pays des purs. Car *pak*, en iranien et en afghan, veut dire pur.

Par ces quelques exemples, on mesure l'étendue de l'emploi de cette racine qui, à notre insu, apparaît maintes fois dans notre vocabulaire quotidien.

Véronique Abu-Nijmeh

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Exposition

Rola Shukairy revient au CCF pour nous présenter ses dernières créations abstraites. Jusqu'au 30 septembre au CCF. Entrée libre.

Cinéma

Cycle Portraits de femmes.
L'Histoire d'Adèle H., film de François Truffaut (1975), couleur, avec Isabelle Adjani. En 1851, Adèle Hugo a suivi ses parents qui se sont exilés à Guernessey. Elle rencontre un officier anglais qui part au Canada sans plus se préoccuper d'elle. Elle essaie de le reconquérir par tous les moyens. Séances au Centre culturel français le lundi 21 septembre à 18h30 et 20h30.

Théâtre

Soldi wal Bolbol, spectacle de marionnettes sans paroles, par la troupe franco-jordanienne, Kharouf et Tawfik, au Théâtre. Soldi est un petit garçon qui

même vie paisible et sa tor-
matin, un
leur nid sur
jardin. Un
culturel
français 20
à 18h30. Les
également
certains
ennemies.

Éducation

Laissons passer la réflexion des élèves

En classe, ils ont rarement l'occasion d'exercer leur sens critique. État, parents, professeurs, enfants, tous l'admettent mais restent impuissants face à un système éducatif dominé par les notes et les livres.

Enquête sur une éducation qui a besoin d'air.

Par Amineh Ishtay et Arine Mango

«Développer le sens critique chez les élèves, c'est un principe dont nous sommes tous conscients mais qu'on applique rarement», reconnaît un professeur d'histoire avec quelque amertume. Susciter la réflexion dans les salles de classe du pays

n'apparaît pas comme une priorité du système éducatif jordanien. Qui met en cause ? Il serait trop facile de désigner un bouc émissaire. Les responsabilités sont partagées. D'autant plus que le phénomène n'est pas nouveau mais est le résultat d'une

longue tradition ancrée dans les mœurs d'enseignement du pays. D'ailleurs, les grandes lignes directrices qui fondent les programmes scolaires, n'ont pas vraiment évolué au cours des quarante dernières années, malgré la grande réforme de 1991 (voir encadré). Notons tout de même l'introduction progressive au tawjilhi (équivalent du baccalauréat français) de questions appelant l'esprit d'analyse de l'élève. Néanmoins elles ne représentent encore que 10% de l'ensemble des épreuves.

Septembre noir

L'évaluation continue de s'appuyer sur la mémoire davantage que sur la réflexion personnelle et représente un obstacle à l'ouverture des esprits. «Si je demande à mes élèves d'écrire leur propre journal d'actualité, ils ne se réjouissent pas de cette liberté mais s'ingénient d'abord de la façon dont cela va être noté», se désespère Mounir Haddadin, professeur d'histoire au collège des Sœurs de Nazareth. Pas la peine de se fatiguer. Il suffit d'apprendre par cœur et de recréer ses leçons. Les élèves l'ont bien compris : «Cela sert à quoi d'aller au-delà des livres puisqu'ils sont la seule source utilisée pour l'examen ?», remarque l'un d'eux sans état d'âme.

Critique allègre des manuels scolaires

En France, le Ministre de l'Éducation nationale Claude Allègre, connu pour ne pas pratiquer la langue de bois, a exprimé sa vive opposition aux manuels scolaires. En effet, il déclarait dimanche dernier qu'il fallait en finir avec ces «livres qui fixent aux élèves le niveau des programmes, qui sont trop chers, qui donnent les enfants de sujets qui sont complètement inutiles».

Un coup de gacole en guise d'appel au rapport remis la semaine dernière sur le sujet, par le doyen de l'inspection générale d'histoire-géographie. La mission d'évaluation qu'il présidait a étudié le contenu de 200 manuels, de la sixième à la terminale. La conclusion est sans appel : les éditeurs cherchent davantage à contenter les professeurs qu'à satisfaire les souhaits de l'institution. «Les connaissances fondamentales ne sont pas présentées de manière structurée». Ces manuels seraient une copie d'un «carnet de tapage». Ainsi, l'exposé des savoirs ne représenterait plus qu'un tiers de leur contenu.

Ce reproche est une constante chez Claude Allègre, qui dénonce notamment les nombreuses erreurs de ces ouvrages. Mais selon lui, ils accentuent également la sélection sociale : «Avec des contenus trop abondants, l'enfant qui n'a pas des parents à bac+5 est perdu».

D'après un article publié dans Libération

Le livre, voilà la victime idéale. Silencieux, sans autre mobile que le plus honorable qui soit : transmettre des connaissances. Mais on ne s'attaque pas aux livres scolaires comme ça.

Une sorte de sacrilège semble entourer l'objet. «Le livre, c'est la Bible. Aux yeux des élèves, c'est la clef de leur avenir», lance carémeusement Mounir Haddadin.

Depuis sept ans, à quelques modifications près, les élèves se trimbalent avec les mêmes ou-

vrages dans les cartables. Or, dans un monde sans cesse en évolution, rien ne vieillit plus vite qu'un programme scolaire.

De plus, certains événements majeurs de l'histoire de la Jordanie restent traités de manière marginale.

Talou des talous, Septembre noir (conflit armé entre fedayins palestiniens et armée jordanienne en 1970) est survolé. «C'est mentionné brièvement, admet-on au ministère de l'Éducation nationale, nous voulons protéger l'unité nationale et éviter les conflits sur un thème délicat». La plupart des professeurs acceptent cette prudence de bon aloi et préfèrent ne pas en parler en classe. Ils n'y voient qu'un sujet de polémique, selon l'expression d'un professeur d'histoire : «Je ne veux pas diviser ma classe. Nous sommes une société où se mélangent les origines et les religions. La classe est un milieu de vie où l'élève apprend à vivre avec chaque membre d'une même famille est différent».

Bac made in England

À partir de là, fatal brûler tous les livres scolaires dans un gigantesque autodafé ? Encore une fois, cela ne résoudrait rien. Comme le souligne très justement un élève, «il est facile de faire porter la faute aux livres mais en fait elle revient à ceux qui les utilisent». En effet, par manque de courage ou de volonté, les professeurs, dans leur grande majorité, n'osent pas quitter le carcan du livre et s'opposent à l'usage des programmes qui lui sont proposés. Hors du manuel, point de salut. Ainsi dans un cours de sciences, l'enseignant va se contenter de reproduire au tableau les équations inscrites dans le livre, sans utiliser d'expériences-labo pour mieux se faire comprendre. «À l'école, ils ont un cours sur

la lumière et ses fonctions. Mon fils n'a rien appris, se plaint une mère de famille, alors je lui ai montré quelques expériences dans la cuisine. Il a tout de suite compris et il était épaté».

Pour faire face à ces lacunes, certaines écoles privées ont décidé d'adopter des programmes scolaires étrangers, plus flexibles et mieux adaptés à la réalité du monde arabe. Parfois elles proposent même à leurs lycéens de passer un bac international made in England, équivalent du tawjilhi reconnu par le Ministère de l'Éducation.

Enfin les parents ont également leur part de responsabilité dans cet échec à l'ouverture d'esprit.eux-mêmes formés dans ce moule étroit, généralement ils s'envisagent pas une seconde de modifier un système d'évaluation, rassurant pour tout le monde. L'essentiel, c'est que mon fils ou ma fille ait des bonnes notes pour que son avenir professionnel soit assuré. Peu importe s'il est capable de réfléchir par lui-même, du moment qu'il a la tête bien pleine.



Scène de rentrée scolaire dans un collège français. Les élèves accumulent des manuels que parfois, ils n'utilisent même pas dans l'année.

Une réforme inaboutie

Au ministère de l'Éducation, on affirme que le projet éducatif en Jordanie n'est pas le fruit du hasard. C'est vrai. En 1985, le roi Hussein, dans un long discours, met l'accent sur «la nécessité d'adapter le système éducatif aux progrès scientifiques et aux changements sociaux afin de diminuer la distance entre l'école et la vie réelle de l'élève». À la suite de ces discours, on a pris le pouls de l'école, on l'a examinée sous toutes les coutures, avant d'envoyer un certain nombre de pistes pour réformer un système qui vieillissait mal. Les recommandations reprenaient en gros les grandes lignes du discours royal :

- orienter les programmes scolaires vers la vie concrète ;

- favoriser le sens critique ;

- aborder les sujets d'un point de vue davantage jordanien ;

- ouvrir aux expériences des autres pays.

Bien entendu, il n'était pas question de tout remettre en cause. Les fondements de la politique éducative, telles que les valeurs de la civilisation islamique et arabe ou la Révolution arabe ont été conservées. Plus inquiétants est la référence persistante à la loi sur l'éducation de 1964 :

«Musulman moderne»

En 1987, une grande conférence s'est tenue afin de préciser les objectifs de la réforme. Quatre ans plus tard, les premiers changements sont intervenus et depuis 1996, tous les niveaux scolaires sont fournis en livres flamboyants neufs. La Jordanie est devenue une nation à la pointe de la technologie.

Malheureusement, dans les faits, ces modifications n'ont pas vraiment modifié la vie traditionnelle des classes. Les élèves d'aujourd'hui se plaignent encore de continuer à tout apprendre par cœur et

réclament des débats sur les problèmes actuels : «Dans les journaux, on lit beaucoup de choses sur l'Islam dans le monde. Pourquoi ne l'évoque-t-on pas à l'école ?», s'interroge une étudiante. Jaber Abu Ghalyoun, professeur de religion, admet que «le programme scolaire n'a pas grand-chose à voir avec la vie actuelle et ne contribue pas à former la personnalité d'un musulman moderne». Il fait dire que les enseignants ont des idées limitées de «directives» pour conduire la réforme. Celle-ci ne s'est accompagnée d'aucun plan de formation d'équipes pédagogiques désignées. «Le sens critique existe mais nous ne savons pas comment le faire émerger», regrette un enseignant. Du coup, le professeur se contente de modifier le contenu de son cours sans changer de méthode. Le livre est toujours roi.

A.M.

«Réfléchissez un peu !»

La sonnerie interrompt brusquement les voix des enfants. Ils se dirigent chacun vers leur classe respective pour former des files, visiblement fatigués. Rapidement, les conversations reprennent : garçons et filles évoquent avec déconcentration l'émission télévisée de la veille. Enfin, les dixèmes entrent dans leur salle, succédés par leur professeur.

«Bonjour», dit-elle le sourire aux lèvres.

«Bonjour, Madame», répondent en chœur les élèves.

Dans un silence religieux, elle ouvre un livre et pose la première question : «Qui se rappelle du sujet de la dernière fois ?»

Quelques mains timides se lèvent, au milieu d'une indifférence générale.

C'est une fillette désemparée qui prend la parole. «La pollution, Madame».

Puis, l'interrogation reprend de plus belle : «D'où vient la pollution d'après vous ?» Elle fixe un garçon qui est visiblement peu intéressé par le cours scolaire.

«Vous ne savez pas ?», dit-elle le sourire aux lèvres.

La maîtresse rougit de colère.

«Réfléchissez un peu ! C'est un sujet que nous avons abordé à plusieurs reprises».

«Le problème avec ma classe, c'est qu'il faut leur expliquer», affirme Barbara, une professeure d'anglais, les semblant incapables de réfléchir par eux-mêmes.

Si une question n'est posée dans le livre, les élèves immédiatement font la réponse.

«C'est une question que ce n'est pas dans le livre», dit-elle.

On ne leur apprend pas à penser.

ser, il faut leur montrer. Le seul intérêt, en fait, c'est de leur donner quelque chose à dire. Cela m'a beaucoup intéressé car j'ai vu que les élèves ne savaient pas ce qu'ils devaient dire dans le livre. C'est leur sens critique qui est en jeu. Je suis tout de même convaincue de constater que les élèves ne savent pas réfléchir.

Cette idée a été exprimée récemment chez les professeurs d'origine étrangère. «Le système scolaire jordanien ne laisse pas aux élèves la place à la réflexion. C'est la situation s'est améliorée, mais on est encore loin de l'objectif. Les élèves ne savent pas réfléchir par eux-mêmes. Les élèves ne savent pas réfléchir par eux-mêmes. Les élèves ne savent pas réfléchir par eux-mêmes».

A.L.

Archéologie

Et Jésus ressuscita le tourisme...

Les archéologues poursuivent leurs recherches sur le site présumé du baptême du Christ. À la grande joie des professionnels du tourisme, qui y voient déjà un futur lieu de pèlerinage.

Où Jésus de Nazareth a-t-il été baptisé ? Après presque deux mille ans de recherche, il faut reconnaître que cette question laisse perplexité. Certes, on situe l'événement fondateur très vaguement dans le Jourdain, mais avec une marge d'erreur de plus de 100 kilomètres ! Pourtant, à l'aube du deuxième millénaire, une piste semble s'ouvrir aux archéologues. À 40 kilomètres d'Amman, près du village de Kafra, dans la région de Rama, un monastère byzantin (Vème-VIème siècle ap. J.-C.) a été découvert il y a quelques mois. Sur un léger promontoire, des murs en belle pierre blanche, comme à Jérusalem, sont encore visibles. Des mosaïques en mauvais état ont également été exhumées.

Les byzantins auraient-ils donc réussi à identifier le lieu où Jean le Baptiste a baptisé Jésus ? Rien ne permet encore de l'affirmer à 100%. Reste que le monastère, à une quinzaine de mètres de l'eau du Jourdain,

s'accorde avec les vagues prévisions de l'évangéliste Saint-Jean sur l'emplacement du geste sacré : «Ceci se passa à Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain, où Jean baptisait» (Jean 1, 28). Le baptême aurait eu lieu sur la rive gauche du Jourdain en face du village de Béthanie (Beitvira, en grec), situé à l'extrémité droite, comme le montre la carte-mosaïque de Madaba (voir ci-contre). L'un des archéologues grecs demeure néanmoins prudent : «Nous souhaitons que les nouvelles découvertes confirment notre idée que Jésus fut baptisé à cet endroit ou au moins qu'il y a séjourné». Mais les archéologues n'ont pas attendu davantage de preuves pour donner au site le nom de «Maghtas» (mot arabe qui signifie baptistère).

Zone militaire

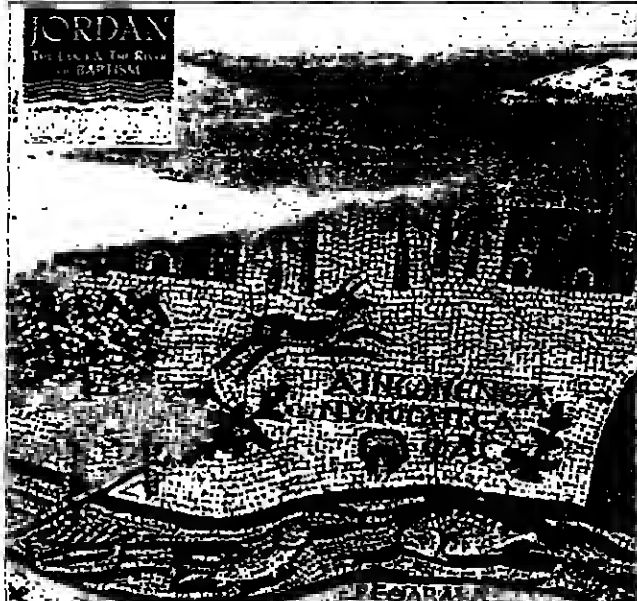
Quoi qu'il en soit, les professionnels du tourisme se frottent déjà les mains et comptent sur le boum attendu de l'an 2000, quand des millions de touristes débarqueront au Proche-Orient

pour fêter le 2000^e anniversaire du Christ. La Jordanie est le seul pays au monde qui tire son nom d'une rivière sacrée au cœur de la Terre Sainte. Et avec plus de 25 sites bibliques, elle peut légitimement espérer tirer profit du rush.

Pour l'instant, le site, en pleine zone militaire, est interdit d'accès au grand public mais il devrait s'ouvrir au tourisme dès la fin 1999.

Par ailleurs, le directeur de l'Agence jordanienne du tourisme entend faire du royaume hachémite un lieu de passage obligé dans la région. «Il faut que la Jordanie devienne une destination à part entière», insiste-t-il. Il est vrai qu'à l'heure actuelle, la Jordanie n'est souvent qu'une étape dans les visites choisies par les touristes pour Israël ou l'Égypte. L'échec de l'an 2000 arrive à point nommé pour mettre en valeur un patrimoine encore largement sous-estimé.

Sammy Abbadi



Sur cette carte postale, éditée à Jérusalem pour le deuxième millénaire du baptême du Christ, Maghtas est situé du côté israélien, à Béthanie (Beitvira en grec, juste en dessous des poissons sur la carte). Les Jordanien, eux, sont persuadés qu'il se trouve de leur côté.

Nikita, impact garanti

Nikita, un film français de Luc Besson (1990), non sous-titré, avec Anne Parillaud, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Tcheky Karyo, Jeanne Moreau, Jean Reno. En prêt au Centre culturel français.

C'est un peu comme le roman policier que vous ne pouvez pas lâcher et que vous emmenez jusque dans les toilettes. Nikita, c'est ça, un shoot d'adrénaline qui vous tient en respect devant l'écran pendant près de deux heures. Maître-mot de cette délicate dépendance : le rythme. Aux oubliettes, les temps morts : le film est sous perpétuelle tension, servi par une Anne Parillaud, survoltée dans le rôle de Nikita (César de la meilleure actrice). Tonique et musclée, elle mène l'action comme une héroïne inquiétante, liane insaisissable et dangereuse. Rien à voir avec une messagère rose, la Nikita de Besson est plutôt du genre teigneux. L'histoire d'une pauvre, qui me un filic lors d'un casse raté. Condamnée à perpétuité, elle est récupérée par les services secrets de l'État français qui font croire à son suicide en prison. Pour la société civile, Nikita est morte. À partir de là, elle n'a pas trop le choix : soit elle collabore, soit elle retrouve la tombe qui déjà l'attend.

Jean-Hugues Anglade, c'est nous, le seul personnage qui nous relie à la réalité, dans un monde parallèle froid et feutré que l'on voudrait complètement imaginaire. Luc Besson nous livre ainsi un film noir où les personnages sans scrupule «n'ont peur de rien, ni de perdre la vie, ni de la faire perdre aux autres». Exemple caricatural de cette définition : Victor le nettoyeur, incarné par Jean Reno, terrifiant dans sa mission de Monsieur Propre insensé.

Huit ans après sa sortie, Nikita n'a rien perdu de son impact : sobre jusque dans les costumes dont la découpe précise évoque le sifflement d'une balle. Sobre et sans fioritures.

Y.L.



The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul Hamid Adzasi

Pan-Arab Games update

Croatian appointed head coach of basketball team
AMMAN (Star)—As predicted last week, Jordan's National Basketball team now has a new coach.

What we did not predict was that he would be from Croatia—the US was our guess.

The new coach, Mr. Vladimir Vanjak, has an interesting CV. He began his playing career with BC Zadar, winning the National Cup, and after retirement, he was appointed the President of the Croatian Basketball Coaches Association.

His coaching career took him to BC Cibona, where his team reached the semi-finals of the European Cup in the 1988-89 season. He was also the Assistant Coach of the Croatian National Basketball team during the Goodwill Games at St. Petersburg.

Vanjak will be on a salary of \$4000 a month. He is under probation for three months, after which if all goes well, he will be signed up for another ten months, until the end of the Pan Arab Games.

New coach for the women as well

AMMAN (Star)—Emad Al Sa'ed was appointed the new coach for the Women's Basketball team, after the former coach Fadi Al Sabbah was expelled.

Al Sabbah was accused of being biased to his players, from Al Jazeera club. The accusation was made in a signed memo from some of the national team players, and was presented to the Jordan Basketball Federation.

Al Sabbah, reached fourth place with the Jordan team during the last Pan Arab Games held in Beirut.

Do not mess with Fokasheen!

AMMAN (Star)—Jordan's National Football team coach, the Yugoslavian Fokasheen, is being very firm with the players.

During the current training camp in Egypt, he expelled four key players because of their lack of commitment to training. The four players were Abu Zimin, Al Taher, Abu Dawoud, and Al Shyah. Unfortunately, he was forced to reinstate them all, after all the other players protested, and refused to participate in the training camp unless they were called back.

Jordan's Women Karate team wins medals
AMMAN (Star)—The Jordan Women Karate team proved themselves during the Arabic Championship held in Lebanon. Teams from Lebanon, Syria, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, UAE and Tunisia were also competing.

The Jordanian team won four medals: a silver medal by Bothayna Al Mahsir, and three bronze medals by Al Kata team, represented by Marina Harb, Rwan Bsharab and Shatha Fawzi. Bothayna Al Mahsir, Mona Al Khwaja and Fadwa Abdul Hafez.



Fokasheen



Al Taher



Al Shyah



Abu Zimin



Abu Dawoud

Italian Serie A results

Florentina (2) Empoli (0)
Florentina dominated from the start with Portuguese playmaker Rui Costa scoring from 25 metres in the sixth minute and Argentina's Gabriel Batistuta blasting home in the 60th. Three minutes later Florentina's mercurial Brazilian Edmundo and Empoli's Di Fusco were sent off for violent play.

AC Milan (3) Bologna (0)
Germany's Oliver Bierhoff, last season's top scorer in Serie A with Udinese, gave Milan an undesired lead with a trademark header seconds before the interval after Bologna had come close several times. Bierhoff added another from the penalty spot in the 51st and Brazil's Leonardo made it 3-0 with a close-range goal nine minutes from time.

Parma (0) Vicenza (0)
Title hopefuls Parma started strongly but strikers Faustino Asprilla and Abel Balbo wasted several chances. Vicenza gained confidence and playmaker Lamberto Zauli nearly stole a late winner.

AS Roma (3) Salernitana (1)
Salernitana frustrated AS Roma early on and took the lead in the 41st minute through Cameroon's Rigobert Song. But when defender Pietro Fusco was sent off seconds before the interval, Roma took charge. Brazilian Paulo Sergio scored in the 48th and 82nd minutes and Francesco Totti the 61st.

Udinese (2) Sampdoria (2)

New Italy midfielder Jonathan Bachini put the hosts on top with a 15th minute shot but Sampdoria, heartened by a fortunate own-goal a quarter of an hour later, took the lead in the 37th through Vincenzo Montella. Udinese deservedly levelled three minutes from time when Brazilian Amoroso slotted home from a goalmouth scramble.

Perugia (3) Juventus (4)
Juventus were 3-0 ahead at halftime but Japanese World Cup hero Hidetoshi Nakata brought Perugia storming back with two goals on his debut. Daniel Fonseca added a fourth for Juve and Antonio Bernardini pulled one back with a late penalty.

Cagliari (2) Inter Milan (2)
Inter Milan, missing the suspended Ronaldo, fought back with two late goals by substitute Nicola Ventola to draw 2-2 at newly-promoted Cagliari.

Piacenza (1) Lazio (1)
Lazio took the lead in the 73rd minute at Piacenza with a long-range blast from Serb Dejan Stankovic. But Simone Inzaghi—brother of Juventus player Filippo—replied with a header just three minutes from time.

French 1st Division results

Girondins Bordeaux (3) Montpellier (1)

Bordeaux extended their perfect record with a fifth successive victory to go four points clear at the top of the standings, scoring through former Montpellier defender Herve Alier and strikers Kaba Diawara and Sylvain Wiltord. Winger Laurent Robert pulled one back for Montpellier, the highest-scoring team's 13th goal of the season.

Bastia (2) Le Havre (0)

Striker Pierre Laurent scored both goals for the Corsicans, the first a fine lob from a ball by Polish former Flamengo midfielder Mariusz PiekarSKI, the second from a cross by Portugal's Paulo Alves.

Nancy (0) Paris St Germain (0)
PSG struggled again against a promoted team after their 2-1 home defeat by Lorient in their previous match.

O. Marseille (1) Rennes (1)
Marseille went ahead with a superb goal, an overhead kick by Florian Maurice from a headed pass by fellow France international Christophe Dugary. But Rennes, who won at the Velodrome last season, shocked Marseille with a 90th-minute equaliser, Christophe Dogon glancing a header in at the near post from a corner.



Poetry in motion

Davenport wins her first Grand Slam

NEW YORK—Lindsay Davenport lost her cap, not her cool, and the US Open crowned its first US-born women's champion since 1982.

Davenport, playing in her first Grand Slam final, slammed forehand and backhand winners down the lines and won 12 of the last 15 points in a 6-3, 7-5 win last week over Martina Hingis, who lost her much and her title.

Davenport, who did not lose a set in the seven rounds of the tournament, won the US\$ 700,000 prize on her mother's birthday. "I guess she thinks she's getting a really nice gift now," Davenport said, breaking into a laugh as she looked at her mother, Ann, in the players' box.

Davenport is the first American-born woman to win the singles championship since Chris Evert won the last of her six titles in 1982. Martina Navratilova, a native of Czechoslovakia, won the title as a naturalized US citizen in 1983-84 and 1986-87.

Hingis, 17, who retains her No. 1 world ranking despite the loss, was trying to become the youngest woman to retain a US Open title. She had won her previous three Grand Slam finals.

This is the first year since 1990 that four different women



Davenport lifts the US Open Trophy

have won the Grand Slam singles titles. Hingis won the Australian Open, Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario won the French Open and Jana Novotna won at Wimbledon.

On a sun-drenched day, Davenport got an early service break for a 2-1 lead in the first set by dictating play with sharp volleys and passing shots. Hingis was handcuffed by the wildness that bothered her throughout the tournament.

In the seventh game, at dusk, Davenport got a break when the wind knocked off her

white baseball cap as she hit the ball into the net on a tough volley. Umpire Dessie Samuels ordered a let and Davenport won the replay to move to break point.

Hingis looked on in dismay, then lost the next point to give Davenport another service break for a 5-2 lead. When she came back from the changeover, Davenport had secured her cap with bobby pins.

Tennis rules state that a let is called and the point replayed the first time a cap flies off, or a ball falls out of a player's pocket. The second incident leads to a warning, and the third time results in a lost point. "I don't like this rule, it's unfair for the players like me," Hingis said. "I had that point won, it's her fault if the ball falls down, it's not my mistake. It's a stupid rule. I had a chance to make that point." Hingis, who complained about several line calls during the match, said it was "pretty ridiculous" that Samuels, from Terrell, Texas, was the umpire for a US Open final involving an American player.

Davenport, who moved past Novotna to No. 2 in the world rankings, wrapped up the first set in 37 minutes with a backhand on the line. Hingis seemed frustrated at times during the second set, dropping her racket on the court after losing one point and screaming at herself after another. Davenport broke for a 4-2 lead but Hingis broke right back and again for a 5-4 lead. But Davenport regained control, breaking back as Hingis ended the 10th game with a double fault and shook her head in dismay.

Davenport, whose mobility vastly improved after she lost 30 pounds last year, held serve in the next game and finished off the match with another service break—hitting a backhand volley for a winner on match point. The champion put her hands on her head in disbelief, then looked lovingly at her racket before smiling at her mother.

Star's Spotlight

Amman (Star)—Each week, The Star will be spotlighting Jordanian sportsmen and sportswomen, who have either made it to the peak of their profession, or are the future talents to look out for.

Odeh chosen for the Arab-Dream Team

Al Jazeera's player, Maen Odeh, was chosen to participate in the 'All Arab Star Game' to be held in Beirut next week, on the occasion of the opening of the Al Riyadi Club's new basketball hall.

The match will see some players from the NBA participating as well.

Odeh has played for Al Jazeera since 1991, and scored the decisive lay-up which enabled Jordan's under 18 team to qualify for the World Cup held in Greece in 1995.

He was picked after his sterling performance during the West Asian qualifiers in Amman last February.



Maen Odeh

Rawan Al Sharif: The Equestrian star of the future

Despite her young age, Rawan Al Sharif proved that she will be a force to be reckoned with, after her fine performance in the first Al Tlal Al Sabaa Equestrian tournament.

She won the first round on her horse, Ghadeh, completing the event without faulting at all. Nisreen Mohammed came second with three faults, Ranya Wadi came third with four faults, Dyalah Abu Saleh came fourth, and Yanal Kyali took fifth place.

The Equestrian sport is developing all the time in Jordan. The Kingdom's biggest achievement was obtained by HRH Haya Bint Al Hussein, who won the equestrian bronze medal at the Pan Arab Games, held in Damascus in 1992.



Rawan Al Sharif's winning smile

Football Roundup

Strasbourg (0) Metz (0)
Ailing Metz, runners-up last season, went a sixth league match without scoring and, having missed out on the Champions' League, must be fearing the worst as they go into their UEFA Cup first round first leg away to Red Star Belgrade played on Tuesday.

Sochaux (1) Olympique Lyon (2)
Lyon went ahead when defender Anthony Sirro deflected a shot by Christophe Delmotte into the Sochaux net. The home side, equalised with a Stephane Dedebant penalty but Swiss player Marco Grassi hit the winner with his third goal of the season from a through-ball by fellow striker Alain Cavaglia.

Toulouse (2) Nantes (3)
Nantes climbed to fifth with this tight victory in a see-saw match in which striker Olivier Monterrubio scored twice in four minutes either side of halftime. Toulouse went ahead early on through Croatian Vladimir Petrovic and equalised in the 73rd minute when Samuel Ipcou pounced on a blunder by goalkeeper Mickael Landreau. But young striker Aliou Touré, snatched a fine winner three minutes later.

Monaco (2) RC Lens (0)
France World Cup striker David Trezeget headed both goals, his first of the season, in a nine-minute spell midway through the second half against 10-man Lens. The champions had striker Pascal Nouma sent off for a late tackle on Muhamed Konjic, catching the Bosnia defender with his studs and leaving him with a gaping wound above the knee.

Lorient (1) AJ Auxerre (1)
Midfielder Pascal Camadini put Lorient ahead in the third minute. The first division newcomers dominated most of the match but Auxerre captain Gerald Batlle snatched an equaliser on the stroke of halftime from a cross by playmaker Stephane Carnot.

English Premier League results

Aston Villa (2) Wimbledon (0)
After Alan Thompson missed a penalty Villa went ahead on the stroke of half-time. Wimbledon's Carl Leaburn was sent off for elbowing and debutant Paul Merson scored from the resulting spot kick after Wimbledon goalkeeper Neil Sullivan parried his initial effort. Ian Taylor converted a Julian Joachim cross to seal the points after 57 minutes.

Charlton (1) Derby (2)
Costa Rican Paulo Wanchope slammed home a Dean Sturridge flick-on to give Derby a fifth-minute lead. Italian Francesco Balzano scored from a free-kick to make it 2-0 on the hour before Clive Mendonca scored a last-minute penalty for



Action from the Juventus versus Perugia match

Charlton. Unbeaten Derby are now fourth. Chelsea (2) Nottingham Forest (1)
Chelsea registered their first league win of the season thanks to first half goals from Italian Gianfranco Zola (1) and Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet (35). Forest's Frenchman Jean-Claude Darbeville scored against the run of play from a tight angle after 69 minutes.

Everton (0) Leeds United (0)
A match of few chances was enlivened only by the sending off of Everton's Frenchman Olivier Dacourt for a second yellow card offence. Leeds failed to capitalise and John Collins went closest with several long-range efforts for Everton.

Leicester City (1) Arsenal (1)
After three successive goalless draws Arsenal looked to be heading for defeat when Emile Heskey hammered home a spectacular left-foot shot after 28 minutes for Leicester. But Stephen Hughes saved the champions from defeat with a swerving equaliser from 30 metres in the final minute.

Manchester United (2) Coventry (0)
Trinidad's Dwight Yorke scrambled home his third goal in two games after 21 minutes as United overpowered their visitors, who barely had a shot on goal. Norwegian Ronny Johnsen sealed the points from close in after 48 minutes.

Newcastle United (4) Southampton (0)
Alan Shearer ended a nine-match barren run in the league with two goals as Ruud Gullit's side chalked up their first win of the season. Shearer scored after eight min-

utes and again in the 38th minute, this time with a penalty given away by Jason Dodd, who was sent off. In the final minute Southampton's Scott Marshall scored his second own goal in five days and Georgian Temuri Ketsbaia rounded off the rout in style.

Sheffield Wed. (3) Blackburn Rovers (0)
Peter Atherton put Wednesday ahead after 18 minutes against a jittery Blackburn side. Andy Hincliffe's free kick (33) and Italian Paolo Di Canio (87) earned the home side their opening win of the season.

West Ham United (2) Liverpool (1)
Welshman John Harrison shocked Liverpool with a fourth-minute header that diverted off Jamie Carragher into the net. Michael Owen went close for the visitors on the half hour but Eyal Berkovic made it 2-0 to West Ham in the 51st minute. Substitute Karlheinz Riedle headed against the bar for Liverpool and then pulled one back in the 90th minute with another header.

Tottenham H. (0) Middlesbrough (3)
Tottenham seem destined for relegation if they continue producing results like this. Goals by Hamilton Ricard (25 and 32 minutes), and by Vladimir Kinder (87 minutes) sealed the game up for Middlesbrough. The only bright side for Tottenham was the 30,000 strong crowd.

German 1st Division results

Hansa Rostock (3) MSV Duisburg (0)
Hansa Rostock, eager to bounce back three days after their 6-1 thrashing by

Bayern Munich, made a slow start and the match was still a goalless draw with 22 minutes left. Goals from Marco Zalman, Igor Panic and Oliver Neuville gave the former East German club a much-needed victory.

SC Freiburg (0) Bayern Munich (2)
Bayern Munich, who had never won at SC Freiburg, were in a class of their own this time. Brazilian striker Giovane Elber opened the scoring from close range in the 21st minute and midfielder Thomas Strunz made it 2-0 with a header in the 35th minute.

Hamburg SV (1) VfL Wolfsburg (1)
Goalkeeper Hans-Joerg Bunt converted the penalty which gave Hamburg SV a 1-0 lead. Striker Steffen Baumgart levelled for the visitors in the dying seconds.

Werder Bremen (2) B. Leverkusen (2)
A last-minute goal by Brazilian striker Paulo Rink salvaged a 2-2 draw for Bayer Leverkusen. Leverkusen took the lead with a penalty by Ulf Kirsten in the 43rd minute but Bremen levelled with a 53rd-minute penalty by Dutch midfielder Lojdwijk Roenblack before going 2-1 up through striker Torsten Frings in the 59th. Bremen assistant trainer Dieter Burdinski was sent to the stands by the referee after a heated exchange with Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum.

Schalke 04 (2) Nuremberg (2)
Schalke 04 led 2-0 at halftime after goals from strikers Rene Eijkelkamp and Martin Max but Nuremberg fought back with second-half goals from Macedonian Sasa Ciric and fellow striker Markus Kurth. Nuremberg are one of three clubs, alongside Bayern and Hamburg, yet to lose a match.

Kaiserslautern (4) Hertha Berlin (3)
Champions Kaiserslautern restored four days after crashing 4-0 away to VfB Stuttgart, two late goals from Danish midfielder Michael Schjoberg securing a 4-3 win. Schjoberg levelled from the penalty spot in the 71st minute before netting the winner three minutes from time. Striker Olaf Marschall also scored twice for the south-western club who are now second, three points behind Bayern.

TSV 1860 Munich (3) Borussia Moenchengladbach (1)
TSV 1860 Munich striker Bernhard Winkler missed a penalty in the opening seconds but made amends by opening the scoring with a header in the second minute before sealing the win from close range with six minutes left. Defender Marco Kurz managed the Munich club's other goal in the 23rd minute. The visitors' goal came from Michael Klinkert in the 56th minute.

Eintracht Frankfurt (1) VfB Stuttgart (1)
Promoted Eintracht Frankfurt managed a draw thanks to a penalty by Angsarg Brinkmann three minutes from time. Bulgarian playmaker Krasimir Balakov had scored in the 71st minute for Stuttgart. Frankfurt were reduced to 10 men when defender Uwe Bindewald was sent off for a second bookable offence in the 74th minute.

THE STAR'S

WORK

COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

Computer & IT companies!

When you visit The Star's Website, you will find a lot of information about the latest in computer and IT technology. You can also find out about the latest in computer and IT technology. You can also find out about the latest in computer and IT technology.

Is there a 'real' performance increase in CD-ROM?: 32X drives spin on

WITH CD-ROM drives enjoying massive speed increases in relatively short development cycles, one has to wonder if there really is a performance increase. Is there a ceiling of speed, after which it is no longer important how fast an animated sequence, or complex sound and graphics are read from a compact disk?

Although little effort has been made to specifically answer these queries, it can be safely said that the performance increase margin is getting a lot narrower.

When CD-ROM drives went from single speed to double-speed in 1994, they truly gave double the performance. Then, when they went to quad speed (4X), there was a considerable performance increase.

Later on, we had 6X, 8X, 10X, leading up to 24X which is witnessed sometime in 1997. Now we have 32X speed drives, with development underway for even faster drives! 32X CD-ROM drives are available in ATAPI and SCSI versions, and are capable of maximum transfer rates of around 4800KB/sec.

Major new technologies present in the more recent drives—aim to lessen the noise of operation and to ensure minimum damage or data loss. CD-ROM drives nowadays, read data without touching the data surfaces, through an alternative means of "holding" the disc from below.

generally better performance. Any PC that you buy today, or within the coming few months, will incorporate a 32X CD-ROM drive. It will give you a 'marginally' better performance than a 24X drive, bearing in mind that the speed of random access is especially

important with regard to complex graphics and sound. CD-ROM software has become more demanding, driving up more than just CD-ROM speed. Obviously, a lot of the development in microprocessors, the size of RAM, and other elements of PC systems have been driven by more demanding software. CD-ROM software is part of that force behind more development, especially now as the sheer size of software has grown tremendously, making it almost impossible to install large applications through any means other than a CD-ROM drive!

Just imagine, the option would be to install no less than 25 diskettes. Apart from the huge time lost in the process, chances are, all sorts of errors and data damage may take place owing to the somewhat "inert" nature of floppy diskettes as a storage media. A single experiment will show that the actual difference

between 24X and 32X drives will differ according to the software in use. For example, with games software which involves continuous reading from CD throughout the game, the relatively small elements are read in real-time during the game and little difference is felt.

In graphic presentations, animated sequences and 3D software there is more of a marked difference which is 'clocked' at a few seconds per frame. In the end result, maybe after half an hour of continuously running software, a minute or two will be saved! So, you need to have a real sense of timing to feel the difference. Of course, when looking back at 8X speed CD-ROM drives, which were the standard only two years ago, you will sense the difference—it is a rather relative matter.

A multimedia kit you would have bought with a 24X drive a while ago, costs the same, if not more than a similar kit today with a 32X drive.

In fact, generally, the price of multimedia facilities has dropped. Nowadays, an average multimedia kit costs around JD 80 from Jordan's computer suppliers, compared to JD 170 a couple of years ago. The price of technology continues to drop. 32X drives are definitely a development in the right direction. For first time users, they offer the power to truly appreciate the wonders of multimedia computing. For the rest of us, they present another step, although small, towards speed in the information age.

Arab Business Network on the Internet, by B.O.C

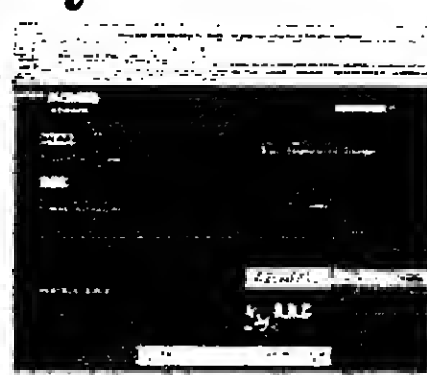
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In addition to containing the Web sites of leading clients in the Middle East, the Arab Business Network site contains databases and information networks dedicated to specialized segments of the market.

The site is very well promoted on the Internet, with links to hundreds of search engines and directories. The site is visited by thousands of

visitors a day, catering to professionals in a number of economic sectors. BOC is a regional Internet and Intranet consultant with offices in Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the UAE. BOC is also a Netscape Communications affiliate and authorized resellers in Jordan, Palestine and Saudi Arabia.

Check out the Arab Business Network at address: www.arab-business.net. For more information, you can also contact BOC on telephone +9613194.



Finally, eye rest for computer users

IBM RESEARCH has announced a new, flat-panel computer display that allows users to see text and images with 200 pixels-per-inch clarity. This is indistinguishable from the printed page.

Code-named Roengen, the prototype has four times the pixels, or picture elements, in the same space as common cathode-ray tube desktop monitors, which display 80 and 100 pixels-per-inch.

Roengen displays rely on new active-matrix liquid crystal technology to produce razor-sharp color images that, from a normal viewing distance of 16 inches or more, eliminate for the human eye the fuzziness associated with electronic displays. Office equipment using

such displays will significantly reduce, if not eliminate, eyestrain.

Legibility—ability to clearly read characters on screen—is closely related to reduction of eyestrain, and IBM is capitalizing on this relation to produce their latest eye-strain free product. It is believed that computer eyestrain is linked to the effort the human eye must make to fill in gaps that exist between the small light elements of computerized displays, which represent only a fraction of the elements of a real world image.

Initially, IBM will target the new displays at the high-end of the market. It will be mainly targeted at sectors like the aircraft design,

medical imaging, legal record scanning and digital art libraries. At a later stage, IBM intends to introduce the technology to its desktop PC range.

Roengen displays will be priced at over \$5,000. Of course, prices will fall as this meritor technology takes off. Sometime, towards the end of this year, Roengen screens should be available to selected customers. According to IBM's information release, the new displays offer full color depth and gray-scale shading on a 16.5 inch diagonal viewing area of 2,560 by 2,048 pixels, or 5.2 million full-color pixels in all. Each screen uses 15.7 million transistors and 1.64 miles of thin film aluminum alloy wiring.

News update

NETS offers Internet redundancy

NETS has announced that it has finalized its set-up in Al Abdali exchange, and by doing so, are now the first Internet service provider (ISP) in Jordan to offer redundancy not only on international circuits, but also on the local exchange level. In other words, if for any reason the primary T1a Al Abdali exchange is down, users will be able to connect via the new Abdali numbers.

The new Internet number is 5671141. This line is now in operation and the capacity of it and on the old numbers, as well, will be further increased before the end of the month.

300MHz Pentium II for notebooks

Intel is set to announce a new 300MHz Pentium II processor, for notebook computers. This should take notebook PCs into the next performance level. The processor is to be introduced as part of a 'Mobile Module' based on a cartridge, similar to the Pentium II black cartridge casing. This will include a built-in bridge to a notebook's accelerated graphics port and a separate 66MHz bus for processing graphics. With such powerful notebook systems on the way, there is speculation that the notebook can take on the desktop as a user's main system.

Epson appoints a West Bank distributor

Epson, a leader in printing technologies and office technologies in general including scanners and projectors, has recently appointed an official distributor for the West Bank and Gaza. 'Creative Technologies' is a company based in Nablus, which will establish a network of distributors around the Palestinian territories. This appointment comes as a sign of Epson's commitment to the Arab and Middle Eastern markets and highlights the company's interest to include the West Bank and Gaza in its Middle East network of countries.

INTERVIEW

BY ZEID NASSER

The heat is on, inside your Pentium: Beware clock-doubled Pentiums

"300MHz PENTIUM for low prices", claim the advertisements we see everyday in our local newspapers. Upon seeing the rather low prices advertised, you have to wonder whether it is possible for the latest Intel processor technology to be priced so competitively.

Well, you're probably right to doubt this offering. Chances are that these processors have been manually clock-doubled or tripped!

Basically, you must be aware of the fact that not all 300MHz or even 266MHz are actually running at true 300MHz or 266MHz. They could be clock-doubled by a technician, who has the skills to make some adjustments to the processor and motherboard, delivering a diagnostic report that your system is actual running at a faster speed than the originally designated speed by Intel.

So, why is it a problem? Well, because your Pentium processor tends to heat up if the operating system and applications in use are demanding. You may find yourself in a situation whereby your processor will go up in smoke!

Of course, for the experienced user, a couple of software checks should be enough to realize if your system is running at 'true 300MHz' or not.

In any case, Intel has announced war against clock-doublers and is cautioning the public about the hazards of not checking whether your brand new Pentium is tampered with or not.

Technically, Intel is taking some measures to make it very difficult for anyone to tamper with its processors. This has been achieved with the new Pentium 266MHz Celeron processor, which is tamper-proof.

Also, Intel is establishing a number of standards for its future processors, and these standards are also being adopted by some of its competitors like AMD whose K6-2 processor has also been tampered with by some PC suppliers, delivering a whopping clock-speed increase of up to 450MHz.

That is absolutely amazing. Officially, we still don't have that speed on any desktop! You can imagine how much excitement a claim of such high speed can cause among first-time buyers who maybe naive.

In the United States, a number of entrepreneur are taking this clock-doubling wave a step further, by introducing "cooling systems" hat fit on top of the Pentium processor. The idea is maintaining the clock-doubled speeds and enabling the PC to function flawlessly at speeds exceeding 400MHz when clock-doubled! That is startling.

Back here at home, there have been some cases of clock-doubling. Some suppliers may even offer you this option as an added service if you request it!

So, the basic rule is to ask for guarantees that the processor at the heart of your new system is not clock-doubled. Also, try to stick to the more reputable suppliers, most of whom offer well known brand names. You can rest assured that a Compaq, Hewlett-Packard, IBM or Dell PC is not clock-doubled. Even a number of the large assembler companies in Jordan maintain a policy of not applying clock-doubling.

Just watch your step, and try to find your way through this amazing mess of megahertz and clock-speeds. Good luck.



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